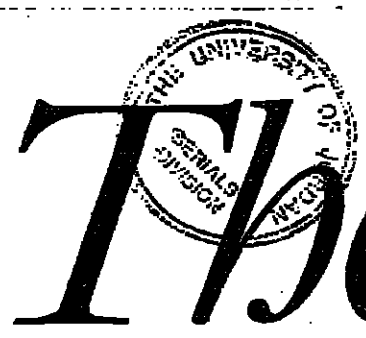


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Friday July 31 1998

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Algeria US 2
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Austria US 20
Belgium BF 70
Canada CS 3.50
Croatia CR 1.50
Cyprus CY 1.50
Czech Republic KC 55
Denmark DK 17
Dubai D 5.50
Egypt EA 60
France FF 12
Germany DM 3.50
Greece GR 5.00
Hong Kong HK 25
Italy I 3.50
Japan JP 1.50
Korea KR 1.50
Kuwait KU 0.50
Labrador LS 0.50
Lebanon LL 2000
Lithuania LT 1.50
Malaysia M 3.50
Malta MT 0.50
Morocco MO 0.25
Netherlands NL 1.25
Norway NK 15
Oman OR 1.00
Pakistan PK 50
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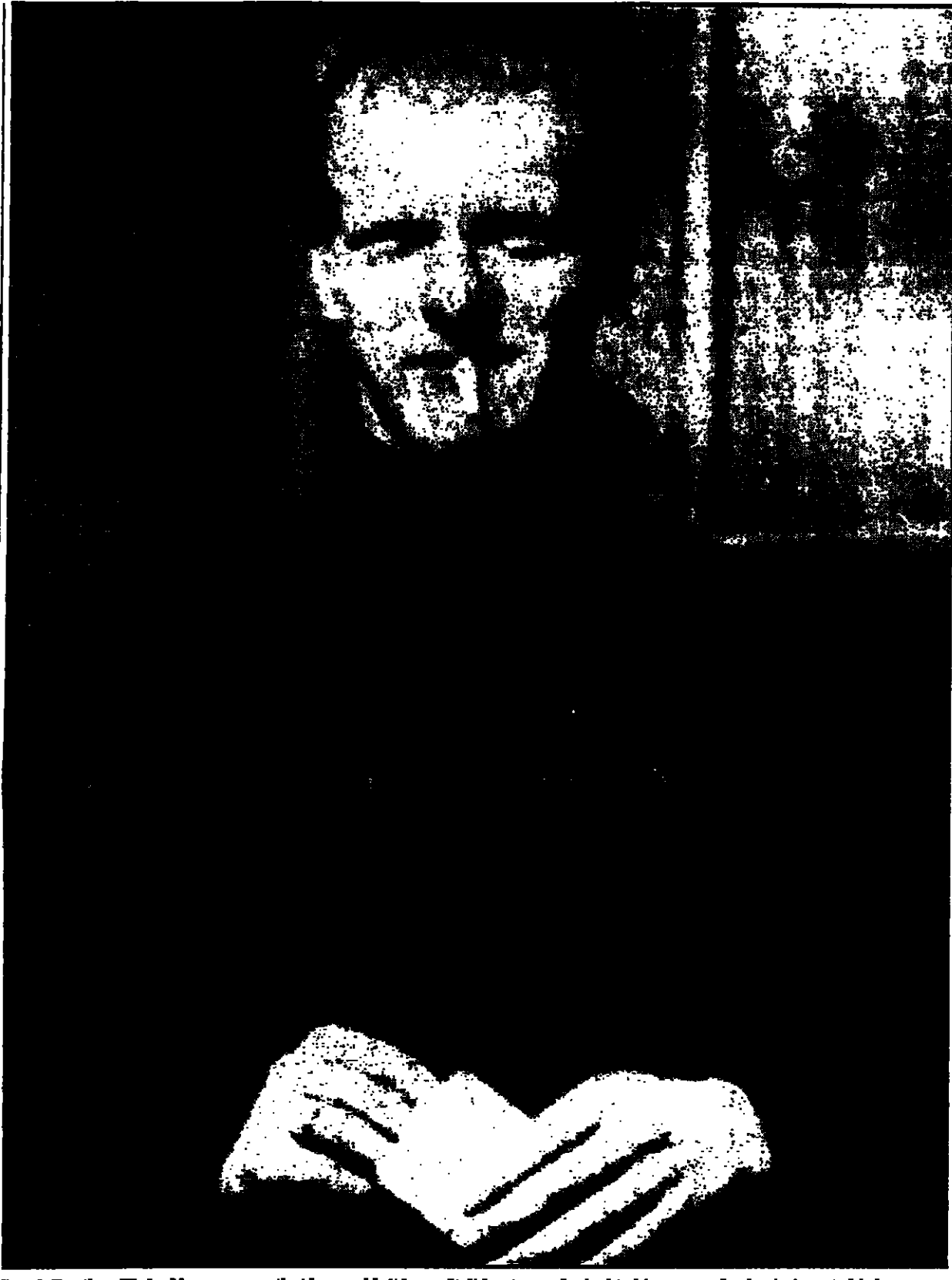
Slosh sex in the South

Comment, page 12

The killing of Derek Bentley



NEARLY 46 years after he was hanged for murder, Derek Bentley yesterday had his conviction quashed at the Court of Appeal. He had been convicted of killing PC Sidney Miles during a robbery, although the fatal shot was fired by his companion, Christopher Craig. Craig was too young to hang. Bentley, a 19-year-old with a mental age of 11, went to the gallows. Today, the Guardian exclusively publishes the account of Bentley's final hours written by Albert Pierrepoint, the official hangman, above, which has never before been made public.



Derek Bentley: 'He had been so sure that he wouldn't hang. It did not seem logical to his uncomplex brain,' wrote his hangman

THE Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, in an historic and extraordinary judgment, ruled that one of his predecessors in the office, Lord Chief Justice Goddard, right, had denied Bentley "that fair trial which is the birthright of every British citizen". Placing the blame for the miscarriage firmly upon Lord Goddard, Lord Bingham said he had acted more as a prosecution counsel than impartial judge. "Far from encouraging the jury to approach the case in a calm frame of mind, the judge's summing-up had exactly the opposite effect. We cannot read it as other than a highly rhetorical and strongly-worded denunciation of both defendants and of their defences. "The language used was not that of a judge but of an advocate... and must have driven the jury to conclude they had little choice but to convict."



WHEN you go to hang a boy of 19 years old, it does not matter that he is tall and broad-shouldered, for at nine o'clock on the morning he is to die, he still looks only a boy to die. And so did Derek Bentley, when the sickly green door of the condemned cell was abruptly whisked open for me on January 28, 1953. He sat at his prison table, watching the dawn.

The murder itself had not been a straightforward one. It may be remembered that Bentley had gone out thieving with a younger boy, Christopher Craig. Both had been pupils at Norbury Manor secondary school. But Bentley was burly and illiterate; Craig was young, quick and cocksure. Upon this particular night, Craig carried a loaded revolver. Bentley had a knuckle-duster with a vicious spike upon it — in itself a lethal enough weapon. But when the two were observed on the roof of a warehouse, and police went up to get them, Christopher Craig fired shots, shouting to the police officers that he was only 14 — the significance of this being that he knew he was too young to be hanged for murder. One of his shots killed Police Constable Miles, who left a widow and children. While Craig was cornered among the chimney-pots — hurling defiant threats at the crouching policemen, and punctuating each threat with a screaming bullet from the heavy revolver he carried —

Bentley, who had been grabbed by another policeman, was pressing himself against the cold brickwork and praying that his pal's bullets wouldn't hit him. The jury, who found both lads guilty of murder, added a recommendation of mercy for Bentley. So he became one of the few killers for whom such a recommendation meant nothing. A storm of public feeling blew up. It increased as Bentley's last days slipped by, his appeal was dismissed, and protest marches by crowds, pleas in Parliament, went all unheeded by the authorities. The storm was going on when I received the long grey envelope asking me to attend at Wandsworth Prison to hang Bentley. As I peered from the upper windows of the No. 77 bus which took me to Wandsworth the day before the execution, I saw newspaper placards along every street, proclaiming: "MP's Fight to Save Bentley."

So even 16 hours before the execution was due, there was still doubt that it would be allowed to take place. My first glimpse of Bentley as he moved at his own pace around the inner yard of Wandsworth showed he was taller and more broad of shoulders than either of the two prison officers who guarded his last hours. His fair hair was blowing about in the cold wind. In his grey prison clothes he looked like a schoolboy dressed for some classroom charade, despite the cigarette that drooped in his mouth. Each time the wind varied in the prison courtyard, he winced away from his own cigarette smoke, and blinked his eyes clumsily. We expected trouble with Bentley. We knew he was physically very strong, and a little simple-minded. He had been so sure that he wouldn't hang. It did not seem logical to his uncomplex brain that — if Craig fired the murder shot and was not to be hanged — he should be executed. His family shared his belief. They went further than just thinking he would not hang. They seemed to expect that he would shortly be released from prison. When his family came to visit him at Wandsworth, the stark little interview room where they saw him had become almost a replica of their cosy family parlour in Norbury. Father, mother, 10-year-old brother Dennis and sister Iris, all laughing and making jokes, sharing fruit and cigarettes. They laughed at Bentley's description of his death-cell as "my hotel room with bath". Several times he repeated a favourite joke — "I

have beaten the warders at cards again today, but I still can't beat them to the door!" When his sister Iris told him she had bought him a ticket for a new year dance, his mother is reported to have said: "No, we'll have to ask the dance-hall manager to change if for another ticket next year, so Derek can have it when he comes out." And at Christmas in the Bentley home, those few weeks before he was to die, the family placed two neatly wrapped parcels upon the Christmas tree. One was a silk tie, the other a box of chocolates. Each was inscribed: "To Derek with love — and the best of luck."

from the family visits. They had ceased to be pleasant parties in the prison interview room, and there had been no more morale-lifting jokes. Instead, Bentley murmured repeatedly: "They can't hang me — can they?" The day before his execution, he walked about the condemned cell, stumbling for words while the warder sat with pencil and drab-coloured prison notepad to write a letter for him. In that letter, there were such phrases as: "Don't let my cycle frames get rusty, they might come in handy some day... keep my mac clean and my tie..." That night in my room at Wandsworth Prison — after checking Bentley's weight, height and physical structure, making my calculation for length of drop, and the routine test of all the apparatus — I sat drinking a bottle of beer and listened to the late session and 200 members had signed a petition demanding mercy for Bentley. The motion for a debate had been rejected, but the possibility of a last-minute reprieve still hung in the air, stronger than I have ever known it on any other execution eve. I must say that my own thoughts were not concerned with any private sympathies for Bentley. I was occupied with the thought that he was a tall, weight-lifter and boxer with a brain younger than his body. Only when he actually saw me coming towards him to pinion him, would Bentley fully begin to realise that he was to die. And as one grey-haired prison officer mumbled to me: "If that boy does blow his top tomorrow, Albert, you're going to see the toughest five minutes you've ever had."

Next day I woke early, did my morning test of the apparatus, and found all in order. I ate my usual Wandsworth breakfast of fried plaice and potatoes, and studied the newspapers for any last-minute news of a reprieve — just as Bentley's friends and family were presumably studying theirs. Bentley's father had led a protesting crowd to the block of flats in Great Peter Street where the Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, lived. They had shouted: "Bentley is not sleeping tonight and neither shall Maxwell-Fyfe."

But the morning papers carried headlines only that there was to be "No Reprieve for Bentley" and I knew I would have my job to do. With my assistant, Harry Kirk, I reported to the governor. He was pale and obviously forcing himself to be very calm. He spoke in a low voice. "Good morning Albert — I see that it has got to be done," he said. "That's all right, sir," I told him. He led the way to the condemned cell, and we waited half a minute until the governor gave the signal, at 60 seconds to 8 am. Then the door was hastily opened. I went in as quickly as I could without seeming to hurry, and Harry Kirk, who was a burly man, was just behind me. Bentley had jumped at the sudden opening of the door. Now he slowly rose. The prison officers on each side of him came quickly to their feet. The boy's crisp, brushed-back fair hair was inches taller than everybody else in the room. I went round the table after him, took his arm without a word and very carefully so there was no jerk that might trigger off his resistance, I put the pinioning-loop upon his wrists and suddenly made it tight. I am sure he still had not properly weighed up the situation. He was still uncertain what was happening. He moved his shoulders wonderingly, but did not say anything. I whispered "Just follow me, lad" and added soothingly: "It's all right, Derek — just follow me."

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The £750 million take-over of the Birmingham Midshires building society by the Halifax was finalised despite some city criticism

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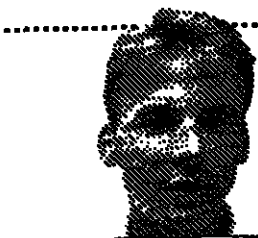
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Tomorrow *The Guardian* offers the complete package, including Saturday, the section which brings you book reviews, arts, interviews and features for the weekend. Plus six pages of sport.

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Sketch

PM's paeon to a glorious leader



Rory Carroll

THE time had come to stand up and be judged and Tony Blair took it like a man. I've done really well, excellent, in fact I'm tops, he announced.

His nerve held as the verdict was expounded. I'm leading the best government in ages, it's great, you should thank me, he said.

His brow furrowed — perhaps there was a catch? I will go down in history as a radical reforming peace-making superster, a terrific performance, burrah, he concluded.

The Government's first annual report ended on such a high note that only dogs could hear, but the ministers and officials in the Downing Street garden were already clapping.

Clouds skidded overhead, but this was basking time; a chance to sit back, close eyes and savour a check-list of triumph before the holidays.

Several hours earlier, Blair had given a shaky interview on Radio 5's Today programme, but he strode into the garden looking confident and poised, relaxed even.

Then he parted his lips, unveiling a black gap in the place of a lower front tooth. We knew about the speckled bald patch and facial etchings. We knew about the baggy eyes and hint of jowl, but this was truly radical.

Was stress equipping the Prime Minister for dentures? Had Cherie flipped the night before?

No time to ponder as Blair launched into his spiel. Billed as a Clintonesque State of the Nation address, this was not the moment for dropped aitches, glottal stops and missed final letters.

Statesmanship demanded received pronunciation. "Each voter who voted for this government, and just as important those who didn't, has a right to expect us to honour our word and each minister here should remember that vote of trust."

Lastly the verbs often came. "That bond of trust, that contract, those pledges, they matter."

At such moments Blair

holds his hands in front of him, bends his upper body forward and raises his eyebrows, momentarily dousing the rictus smile.

Blair relied on a text rather than an autocue, so for some crucial moments his chin was tucked into his chest.

"This is a radical reforming government. Sometimes the revolution is a quiet revolution, but a revolution nevertheless it is."

I had a schoolteacher who claimed to be able to hear the grass grow, but if she had turned down the television at this point to listen to Blairism sweeping the country she could still have lip-read the lovingly recited 177 manifesto promises.

"It is, and remains for me, a tremendous privilege and honour to lead what I hope in retrospect and in history will be seen as one of the great radical reforming governments of our time."

"We can be genuinely proud, all of us, to learn that of those 177, 50 have been met, 119 are under way. Only eight have yet to be timetabled."

What other government this century would have accomplished that, he asked.

At this point, North Korea's Kim Jong Il threw in the towel. Dear Leader, Supreme Commander and the greatest of great men produced by heaven he may be, but he's no Tony Blair.

Blair wasn't finished. The report, a snip at £95,000, was a mine of good news. David Blunkett's educational DDT was "spreading excellence wherever it is found and weeding out under-achievement."

Northern Ireland, crime, the environment, hospitals, social welfare, Europe, economic stability — you name it, it's sorted, or nearly.

Stung by accusations that welfare reform was floundering, he listed nine initiatives, each accompanied by a favourite mannerism — the searching look.

It didn't deter the media from pouncing on the issue afterwards, although it might have softened up the audience later, at last night's question and answer session in Worcester.

Sometimes the delivery tried to match the speed of the triumphs and he stumbled. Social exclusion became social exclusion, third (way) became third.

At the end he raised his hands above the lectern and slapped them together. Like the revolution, you couldn't hear it.

And the absence of a separate orchestra leaves one with a stinging of provocative images, none more powerful than the moment when Afford, rejected and humiliated as Herr Schultz, wearily takes up his trumpet, and mournfully accompanies the title song late in Act Two.

The result is an interpretation which gives equal weight to the audience's discomfort here: the underlying darkness emerges with uncommon force, as the action builds to the moving climax of that title song, spat out with grim irony by Jo Blair's Sally Bowles in a manner that will startle you no matter how many times you've heard the number before.

The production is not without its flaws. Some of the early scenes are too strident, there is some unnecessarily fussy stage business at times, and Blair's Sally perhaps needs just the occasional hint of greater depth and feeling in her journey through the play to justify her eventual destination.

But this is a carefully thought-out and uncompromising interpretation, which, with the theatre looking its best on a summer's evening, provides a timely reminder to funders and public alike that the Watermill is more than just a pretty place.

Rivals dismiss 'radical' Blair



Tony Blair addresses guests in the Downing Street Rose Garden. PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARNON

Even MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

TONY Blair met with derision from Tory and Labour MPs yesterday when he published a 115-page annual report on the achievements of what he described as a "radical, reforming" Government.

He launched the report with a speech to ministers and civil servants in Downing Street's Rose Garden, in scenes reminiscent of the US President's State of the Union address. He said he was embarked on a "quiet revolution".

The glossy annual report was a government, rather than a party, publication and was billed as measuring Labour's manifesto promises against achievement over the previous year.

But the Conservative leader, William Hague, dismissed it as "fiction" and the Liberal Democrats called for a properly audited report.

Twenty thousand copies of the Government's Annual Report 97/98, which reviews progress on the economy, health, education and other areas, have been printed at a cost of £36,000 and are available at £5.95 each. A shorter, free version will be distributed to post offices and libraries.

Many Labour MPs were supportive but others were sceptical. One Labour MP said: "You did not know they could pile bullshit that high, did you? It is a Ben Nevis of bullshit."

Another Labour MP, Dennis Skinner, praised the Government for its success in Northern Ireland and increases in health and education expenditure but regretted the decision to give independence to the Bank of England.

Mr Blair told those assembled in the Rose Garden that the report set out Labour's

'We haven't done everything we wanted to do. But we have a clear sense of purpose and direction, a clear strategy for the future, principles and policies that will see us through'

Tony Blair

177 manifesto commitments: of these 50 had been met, 119 were under way and only eight yet to be timetabled. He expressed hopes that his administration could "in retrospect and in history" be seen as one of the great radical reforming governments of our time.

In an attempt to address accusations that his attempts at welfare reform had so far failed, he set out initiatives in welfare that had already been undertaken.

But the report only deals in detail with government successes, and skirts over the failures and its embarrassments.

Mr Blair only referred in passing to the Government's failures.

"We haven't done everything we wanted to do," he said. "Some things have gone

better than others. And there are always 'events' to deal with."

"But we have a clear sense of purpose and direction, a clear strategy for the future, principles and policies that will see us through."

He insisted the theme running through the report was the "third way" and it was "something genuinely new". He described it as "a belief in social justice and economic dynamism, ambition and compassion, fairness and enterprise going together."

The report, which collates government spending figures, announcements and policy changes, is dotted with colour photographs taken by a freelance photographer who approached people around Britain at random in May. He asked them to write down their opinion on the Government's first year in power.

Downing Street, confronted with accusations that Mr Blair had bypassed the Commons by making the speech in the Rose Garden, defended the decision, saying that, as there was nothing new in it, a Commons statement was unnecessary.

Mr Hague said of the report: "If anyone's putting it in their library, they'd better plunk it in the section marked fiction."

The deputy chairman of the Conservative Party, Michael Ancram, said: "Early pledges to cut waiting lists, keep taxes down and reduce class-sizes have been broken. The British people were offered an early pledge to do these things and they have been delivered early broken promises."

For the Liberal Democrats, the campaign chairman, Nick Harvey, said: "Instead of producing a self-congratulatory glossy report at the taxpayers' expense, the Government should allow the National Audit Office to independently audit their manifesto pledges and their delivery of public services."

Official go-ahead for pig to human transplant tests

Sarah Boseley Health Correspondent

THE first transplant of an animal organ into a human being is within sight after a government announcement yesterday which disarmed rights campaigners and others who fear that new diseases might spread from animals through the human population as CJD did.

The ruling by the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, gave a green light to pioneering research companies.

Mr Dobson stressed he wanted tight regulation of xenotransplantation and to ensure that trials only went

ahead if proved to be safe. But the pharmaceutical giant Novartis, owners of the British company Imutran which is among the main players in the field, expressed its pleasure that it has effectively been told it can apply for a licence.

A document setting out the criteria to be met covers such issues as the safety of the human race from infection and the welfare of the animals. Anyone wishing to set up a trial must apply to the regulatory authority, UKXIRA, but the final decision will rest with ministers.

Lord Haggard, the former Archbishop of York, who chairs UKXIRA, said infection was the main concern.

The regulatory authority would meet international experts next month. They were also building up a long-term surveillance programme for xenotransplants.

"At the moment there doesn't seem a viable alternative (because people are dying for lack of human organs) but it is important that it is not so pushed forward as to discourage human donors."

Imutran is carrying out a safety study, because of the discovery that pig retroviruses — which are harmless in the animal — can pass to man. Some 180 people, many in the former Eastern bloc, who have had experimental

skin grafts or tissue implant from an animal are being monitored to see if they have picked up any viruses.

If the results, expected later this year, are good Imutran will apply to carry out a liver perfusion on a human being.

The operation, which would only be attempted on someone who would otherwise die, will involve diverting the human bloodstream through a pig's liver outside the body.

The patient would gain a few days' respite in the hope that a human liver might become available.

If the perfusion goes well, Imutran will hope to transplant a pig's kidney or heart into a human. It has spent years breeding transgenic pigs, whose organs will not be rejected by the human body.

Mr Dobson said: "Trials in xenotransplantation involving humans will only be allowed to take place if and when we are fully satisfied that the risks are acceptable, taking account of all the available evidence."

He also announced a new campaign to encourage human donors.

But the pressure group Xenotransplantation Concern said the announcement "leaves the British public vulnerable to new infectious diseases. The unpredictable nature of microorganisms such as viruses, and the huge gaps in knowledge which exist and probably always will exist, means that there will always be unacceptable risks associated with xenotransplantation."

Mike Baker, chief executive of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, said: "We believe this is a very backward step in terms of animal welfare and could pose serious health risks to the human population."

Transgenic animals

Transgenesis is the process whereby a human gene is incorporated into the DNA of a fertilised egg from a sow. Genetically engineered eggs enable cross-breeding of successive litters of transgenic pigs with human genes.

Human genes in a liver from these pigs trick the body's immune system into accepting the transplanted liver as human.

1 The pig's liver is removed and is placed in an oxygenated and temperature controlled solution next to the patient.

2 The pig's liver, attached to the patient's groin by a tube acts as a filter in the same way as the patient's own liver which may have already been removed.

3 A second tube passing out of the liver delivers the filtered blood back to the patient via the neck.

Man's best friend

Using a pig's liver to prolong the life of a patient waiting for a human donor organ.

The pig's liver is removed and is placed in an oxygenated and temperature controlled solution next to the patient.

The pig's liver, attached to the patient's groin by a tube acts as a filter in the same way as the patient's own liver which may have already been removed.

A second tube passing out of the liver delivers the filtered blood back to the patient via the neck.

The pig's liver, attached to the patient's groin by a tube acts as a filter in the same way as the patient's own liver which may have already been removed.

A second tube passing out of the liver delivers the filtered blood back to the patient via the neck.

A touch of luxury as Del Boy's car gets a makeover

Nick Hopkins

QUITE what Del Boy would have made of this is hard to imagine. In the TV comedy *Only Fools and Horses*, he trundled around south-east London in a shabby, yellow Robin Reliant which glorified in the sign "Trotters International: New York-Paris-Peckham".

Other owners have been grinning and bearing it ever since. Until now, that is.

Yesterday, the latest version of the derided three-wheeler was launched. The

limited edition Robin Hatch is the Rolls Royce of the fleet, aimed at "the discerning driver" with £10,000 to spend.

It boasts a walnut dashboard and leather seats, thick pile carpets, chrome handles and alloy wheels. The racing green livery is undeniably handsome.

Although the car is being built at the Reliant factory in Tamworth, it was a dealer in Morecambe, Lancashire, who came up with the idea of taking the car into the luxury end of the market.

Ian Hainsworth believes that the BBC series gave the

Reliant a new lease of life. "It is not only older people that want one. It has become a fashion accessory for twenty-somethings. It's a bit of fun for them and it's also cheap."

Fifteen Hatches will be made for sale at Mr Hainsworth's dealership. Then the model will be made to order.

He added: "It is aimed at the Reliant driver who is seeking that piece of luxury only normally found on four wheels. We are proud to say it has every luxury you could imagine. The car has a character all of its own."

James Higham, a retired

foundry worker, became the first owner of the new model yesterday. He has had a dozen Robin Reliants before this one and has borne all the teasing with stoic indifference.

"I've always been on the end of jokes but it hasn't bothered me," said Mr Higham, aged 71. "I've only ever had one breakdown in over 40 years. The car gets me around and that is what is important."

Three years ago the Reliant company went bust, but following a take-over by Glenn Investment Groups, business has flourished.

Matters of life and death

Q. What is xenotransplantation?

A. Any transplant of animal tissues, including livers, kidneys, hearts and even pancreatic islet cells as a possible treatment for diabetes, into the human body, but also the use of animal organs outside the body, as with liver perfusion.

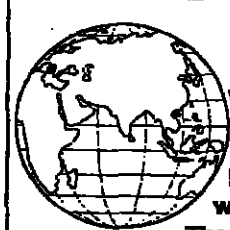
Why do we need it? People are dying on the waiting lists for transplants. There were 6,458 waiting last December. Kidneys are in particularly short supply.

Will any animal do? No. Primates like monkeys and gorillas have been ruled out on ethical grounds — they are thought to have great self-awareness and capacity for suffering in the isolated conditions necessary to produce infection-free organs. Pigs seem best adapted, and they have the right size parts.

Will the body accept a pig's heart?

Not normally. Imutran's big breakthrough was to put a human genetic marker into their pigs, so that the organs of these transgenic animals, as they are called, will not be automatically rejected by the human body. The patient will still have to take drugs to suppress his immune system, as with a human transplant.

Has anybody tried transplanting animal organs into humans? Yes — even in the last century. One of the first in modern times was in 1964 when James Hardy put a chimp's heart into an 88-year-old man in Mississippi. He lasted two hours. Christian Barnard also did a chimp heart in 1967, but said he stopped because he became "emotionally involved with the chimp".



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كتاب الراجز

The world's best-loved and most gruelling cycle race, the Tour de France, is limping under the weight of a doping scandal that everyone knew would come one day. What no one expected was the relentless police raids that have outraged riders, organisers and the public

Scandal robs Tour of glorious ending



The peloton heads for Neuchâtel yesterday during the 18th stage from Aix-les-Bains

PHOTOGRAPH: PASCAL PAVANI

Jon Henley in Paris and William Fotheringham in Neuchâtel

THE world's most famous cycle race limped painfully onward yesterday, the remaining riders sullen and resentful, the organisers defiant and the public furious at what many see as the deliberate dismantling of France's oldest and best-loved sporting event.

The 18th leg of the 85th Tour de France, from Aix-les-Bains to Neuchâtel in Switzerland, saw just 102 competitors gather at the starting line, just over half the 189 who began the gruelling round-France race that left from Dublin two weeks ago.

"My riders don't know what to do, but I told them that it's better to die in battle than it is to die on the sidelines," said Vincent Levenez, manager of the French Casino team, still angry after being grilled by police under the determined investigating magistrate, Patrick Kiel.

Five of 21 teams have abandoned the 1998 Tour, and one has been kicked out. Several team officials and riders are in custody, including Rodolfo Massi, who was wearing the polka-dot jersey of the King of the Mountains. Prosecutors said yesterday they had found drugs from the cortisone group in his hotel room.

The French champion, Richard Virenque, disqualified with the Festina team, has threatened to sue the organisers, and the world champion, Laurent Jalabert, has quit in disgust at the continuing raids, strip-searches and midnight interrogations.

"Arriving at the finish on the Champs-Élysées on Sunday will be a victory, not for us but for the monument that the Tour de France represents," said the Tour organiser, Jean-Marie Leblanc.

Every year since 1903, with interruptions only for the two world wars, the Tour has captivated France. Nearly a third of the population line city streets and mountain passes to watch the brightly coloured peloton hurtle past.

The feats of its stars are lodged in the collective memory. When people speak about the Tour, they talk of childhood dreams, of heroes and supermen, of grilling climbs and death-defying descents.

Except this year. This year the Tour has been caught up



A competitor complains to race director Jean-Marie Leblanc

PHOTOGRAPH: LAURENT REBOURS



A cyclist weeps after retiring in protest

PHOTOGRAPH: JOEL SAGET

in a scandal that everyone knew would come one day. Since 1967, when the British rider Tommy Simpson died from amphetamines on Mont Ventoux, everyone has known that few cyclists could be competitive without drugs.

It is, simply, an inhuman event. Riders do not even think about competing in it until they are cycling 30,000 miles a year. It involves riding nearly 2,500 miles at an average speed of just under 30 miles an hour, in conditions that can range from fog and sleet to heatwaves.

"Let's not be hypocrites. You just don't do that on fizzy mineral water and salads," said Nicholas Chalmé of the French Credit Lyonnais bank, which has sunk \$2.5 million into sponsoring the race.

The use of erythropoietin, a hormone that increases stamina, is rife, but what has angered riders and the public is not the confirmation that doping is endemic. It is the way that the French judiciary, police and Customs officials have set about proving it — and the belief that the Tour de France is paying the price for

the misdeeds of a whole sport. The daily paper *Libération* said the riders "appear much more outraged by the police raids than by the doping, as if the real problem was the bothersome judicial probes".

The Danish rider Bo Hamburger said the race was over for him. "Physically, I may get to Paris, but mentally it's over," he said. "The Danish police wouldn't strip me naked and look up my arse like the French police have done to friends of mine."

The Australian Patrick Jonker said he and his team mates had thrown away anything that might be seized by police, however innocuous. "In this weather you take lots of salts, but we've chucked it all away. By the time the lab finds out what it is, you could have been in a police station for two days," he said.

Much of the French press backs the riders, saying the investigations are too harsh and could have been held off until after the Tour. "Was it really necessary to hit so hard, so fast and with such a sense of judicial spectacle that people are wondering whether the yellow jersey will be awarded to a state prosecutor?" asked *Le Parisien*.

The police have said they will continue their investigations until the finish line and beyond. But to the relief of many, they were prevented from doing so last night. "Tonight we're sleeping in Switzerland," said one rider. "They can't get us there."

'I can understand guys being tempted'

The rider/ A survivor describes the physical and mental hardship

Robert Millar, fourth in the 1994 Tour de France and King of the Mountains, writes:

THE riders reckon that a good Tour takes one year off your life, and when you finish in a bad state, they reckon three years. I've ridden 11 Tours, finished or got close to the end of four in a bad state, so you work it out.

You can't describe to a normal person how tired you feel: how can you describe feeling so tired that you can't sleep? In 1987, when I finished in a really bad way it took me until the end of November to recover; by that I mean until I could wake up and not feel as tired as if I had already done a day's work.

The fatigue starts to kick in on the Tour after 10 days if you're in good shape, and after five days if you're not in your best condition physically. Then it all just gets worse and worse, you don't sleep so much, so you don't

recover as well from the day's racing, so you go into your reserves, you get more knackered, so you sleep less... It's simply a vicious circle.

The best way of describing how you feel is that it's as if you were a normal person doing a hard day's work, you've got flu, and you can just about drive home and fall into bed. By the end of the Tour, you need sleeping tablets.

You can't divide the mental and physical suffering; you tend to let go mentally before you crack physically, with the constant noise all day as you're riding in the bunch — people yelling at you, the cars, the helicopters. If you're still physically strong you can block it out mentally. If not, you never relax — people are shouting, screaming, and trying to touch you.

Riding up one of the mountains in the Tour, if you're feeling bad is like



Robert Millar: 'Once it took me till November to recover'

being sick. Physically, your body has a limit every day, there's only a set speed you can go at and it might not always be good enough.

The pain in your legs is not the kind of pain you get when you cut yourself, it's fatigue, and it's self-imposed.

After a mountain stage, it takes about a day to feel physically normal — if there isn't another mountain stage the next day. I won three mountain stages, and the day after each one I felt bad for the whole day.

It takes two weeks to recover from a good Tour, three months to recover from a bad one. In 1991 I rode with a neck brace for half the race, after I fell off and a load of guys landed on top of me. I'll have that neck injury for the rest of my life. I crushed some vertebrae, displaced a few bits, and they wouldn't go back immediately because of the swelling.

If you crash and get anything more than superficial injuries, end of story. Your body shuts down, stops recovering, and you perform at a lower level. I can understand guys being tempted to use drugs in the Tour. Given the real-life situation of drug use, I'd say it's no worse than in the real world where 1 million ecstasy tablets are sold every weekend. Why should sport be different from real life? I don't think it's an isolated cycling thing, people just expect sport to be cleaner than real life.

The huge risk of pedalling on pills

The drug/ EPO increases the oxygen-carrying red blood cells

Tim Radford
Science Editor

ERYTHROPOIETIN — also known as EPO — is a natural hormone, produced by the human kidneys to promote the production of red blood cells. Since any healthy sportsman naturally produces the stuff anyway, a secretly-injected factory-made version of the hormone itself would be hard to detect. But there is telltale evidence, all the same: an unusually high proportion of red blood cells.

The gene that produces EPO was isolated and cloned in 1983; since then, scientists have been able to produce the stuff as a treatment for victims of chronic kidney failure, who would sicken with anaemia without its help. It has also been used to treat anaemia associated with HIV infection and AZT treatment. Certain cancer patients, too, have low levels of EPO.

But even for people who need it, there is a downside. Its use can lead to chest pain, swelling due to the retention of fluid, rapid heartbeat, high

blood pressure, seizures, shortening of the breath, skin rash, painful joints, diarrhoea, fatigue, nausea and flu-like symptoms after each dose.

All of this means that in many cases, patients also need to take aspirin with the treatment. What they get in return is, quite literally, life-blood: more red blood cells.

And this is the great prize for the cheating athlete. Red blood cells are the trucks that carry oxygen around the body. The more there are, the greater the performer's aerobic capacity. The greater the aerobic capacity, the longer he or she can keep up something hugely effortful, such as distance-run-

ning, swimming, rowing and, notoriously, cycling.

Honest athletes can get so far by training but in fiercely competitive sports that call for high speeds, huge stamina and performance often at high altitude — which just about sums up the Tour de France — riders could always use a few more blood cells. The rewards can be huge — but so can the risks.

Enriched by EPO, blood can get too thick for the heart to pump around. If it occurs in sleep, when the body slows down, tragedy can strike.

About five years ago, Belgian cyclists and orienteers died mysteriously in their sleep — possibly because they had taken EPO.

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4 THE BENTLEY CASE

The Guardian Friday July 31 1998

Family will seek compensation □ Delight mixed with poignancy for campaigners □ Gunman Christopher Craig apologises for 'pain'

Justice at last, 45 years too late for



An elated Maria Dingwall-Bentley carries away from the Appeal Court the judgment that posthumously clears her uncle, Derek Bentley (right), of his conviction for the murder of a policeman in 1952



MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

THE bottle of Moët & Chandon champagne that had been sitting in a south London cupboard for 40 years was finally opened yesterday to celebrate the quashing of Derek Bentley's conviction for the murder of PC Sidney Miles.

Since William Bentley bought the bottle in 1958 in expectation of toasting his son's pardon, the family has experienced many raised and

dashed hopes. In the Court of Appeal yesterday the long crusade reached its conclusion. The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, sitting with Lord Justice Kennedy and Mr Justice Collins, quashed the conviction in a 52-page judgment which severely criticised his predecessor Lord Goddard, ruled that the conviction had been unsafe because of the judge's intemperate summing-up and

expressed regret that the mistrial had not been spotted soon enough to save Bentley. Maria Dingwall-Bentley, who has led the campaign to clear her uncle's name since her mother, Iris Bentley, died of cancer last year, said she was elated by the result but said that her mother was not alive to see it. "I'm absolutely thrilled," she said as she popped the cork and declared the champagne much better than ex-

pected. "The British justice system has had a death on its hands for all those years." She said she held the former home secretary Kenneth Clarke in "absolute contempt". He had had the opportunity to pardon her brother on fresh evidence presented to him by a police investigation but declined to do so. Benedict Birnberg, the family solicitor, who has worked on the case for many years, said: "We are elated at this

historic judgment which is 45 years too late. The poignancy is that we cannot resuscitate Derek and that Iris is not here to celebrate this victory." Tamsin Allen, another member of the legal team which unearthed fresh evidence for the appeal, said that it would seek compensation for the family. She accused the Home Office of lack of will in reopening the case. Christopher Craig, who fired the shot that killed PC

Miles during a warehouse robbery and served 10 years for the crime because at 16 he had been too young to hang, said he was saddened that it had taken so long to clear Derek Bentley's name. He offered to give evidence in the appeal but was not called. "I am truly sorry that my actions on November 2, 1952, caused so much pain and misery for the family of PC Miles, who died that night doing his duty, also for the Bentley family," said Mr Craig, who has worked as a plumber and farmer since his release and who lives in Bedfordshire. "A day does not go by when I do not think about Derek and now his innocence has been proved by this judgment." He said he would never make another public statement on the subject.

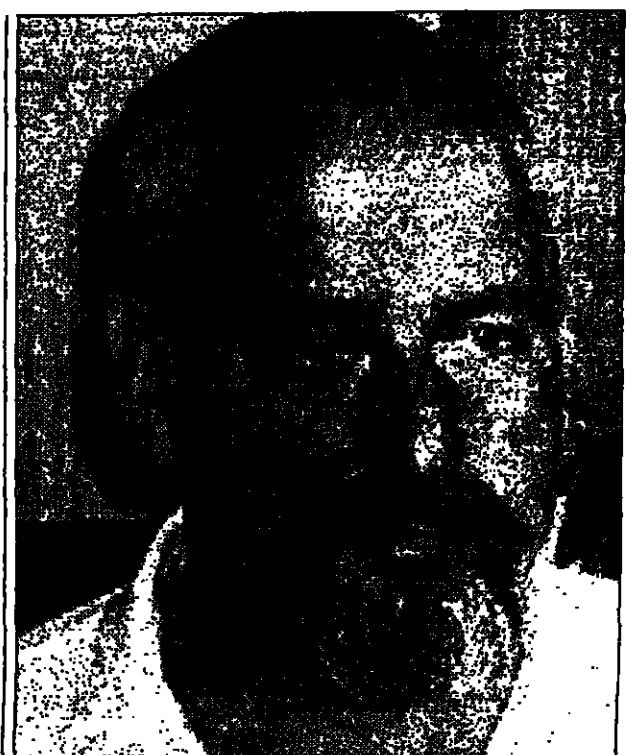
Fred Broughton, chairman of the Police Federation, said: "Our thoughts are with the family of PC Sidney Miles, who gave his life in the line of duty and whose death is often forgotten." It has been one of the longest-running campaigns to clear a convicted prisoner's name and has led to books, plays, a film and songs commemorating Bentley in a way that can hardly have seemed possible when he was a slow, easily-led teenager with a mental age of 11.

He had been born in 1933 and, with his family, bombed out three times in south London during the second world war. He had fallen foul of the authorities by the time he was 14 and in 1948, his headmaster at Norbury Manor school in south London described him as "the most irregular boy I have had in my career" and said that he was "meek, indifferent, sheeplike".

His school report noted that "his parents have on several occasions confessed that the boy is out of hand and out of their control." He was sent to Kingswood approved school near Bristol for breaking into a store. There he was described in reports as "lazy, indifferent, volatile and a 'wise guy' type".

Yesterday Hugh Maw, the educational psychologist at that school, recalled the young Bentley. "He was never violent, he was bullied and easily led," said Mr Maw, whom Bentley nicknamed Slasher because of his haircut of the time. When there was trouble at the school, said Mr Maw, Bentley would be the one left behind as the brighter boys fled. This led to frequent beatings from the authorities and Mr Maw and his wife recalled seeing Bentley's back covered with stripes.

It was already apparent that he was educationally sub-normal, as it was then classified. He was unable even to write his name. When he left the school, he fell under the influence of Christopher Craig, whose older brother was a well-known criminal. The Bentleys disapproved of the friendship, knowing of Craig's habits, but their son ignored their en-



Christopher Craig, who is still alive, had gun and fired



Police Constable Sydney Miles died from a single shot

treates, meeting up with Craig on what was to be his last night of freedom.

Craig was armed with a Colt .45 and had given Bentley a knuckleduster and a knife. Bentley said that he was unaware that they were going to carry out the robbery on the confectionery warehouse until Craig started climbing gates leading into an alleyway. A neighbour spotted the break-in and called the police. Craig resisted arrest and it was what happened over the next 15 minutes that was to form the basis of the prosecution of both men. Three police officers said that Bentley had

shouted out "Let him have it" and one alleged that after those words were uttered a shot was fired and one officer received a glancing blow, probably a ricochet, on the shoulder. Bentley was overpowered and according to police evidence warned them "he'll shoot you". It was 15 minutes later that PC Miles received the fatal shot. Even after his conviction, Bentley hoped for the reprieve which did not come. He was convicted on December 11, 1952, his appeal turned down on January 13, 1953, and he was hanged two weeks later on January 28.



The warehouse in Croydon, south London, where police were called to a break-in

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and misery' □ Lord Goddard used 'language not of judge but of advocate' in unfair summing-up □ **Duncan Campbell** reports

'meek and sheeplike' Derek Bentley

THE JUDGMENT/

The language was an advocate's driving the jury to conclude they had little choice but to convict

THE historic judgment handed down yesterday by Lord Bingham, the Lord Chief Justice, rounded on the summing-up by the original trial judge Lord Goddard. He was accused by Derek Bentley's counsel, Edward Fitzgerald, QC, of acting more as a prosecuting counsel than an impartial judge.

The Court of Appeal also argued that Bentley's appeal shortly before his execution, should have succeeded as it was clear that the joint crime on which he and Craig had embarked was, as far as Bentley thought, over at the time of the shooting.

Lord Goddard, then the lord chief justice, had told the jury at Derek Bentley's murder trial in 1953: "There is one thing I am sure I can say with the assent of all you 12 gentlemen — that the police officers that night, and those three officers [who had given evidence] in particular, showed the highest gallantry and resolution; they were conspicuously brave."

"Are you going to say they are conspicuous liars? Because if their evidence is untrue that Bentley called out 'Let him have it, Chris', those three officers are doing their best to swear away the life of that boy. If it is true, it is, of course, the most deadly piece of evidence against him."

"Do you believe that those three officers have come into the box and sworn what is deliberately untrue — those three officers who, on that night, showed a devotion to duty for which they are entitled to the thanks of the community?"

Referring to Bentley's denial of the words "Let him have it, Chris", Lord Goddard said: "Against that denial (which, of course, is the denial of a man in grievous peril) you will consider the evidence of the three police officers who have sworn to you positively that those words were said."

In conclusion he told the jury: "If young people ... commit crimes of this sort, it is right, quite independent of punishment, that they should be convicted, and if you find good ground for convicting them, it is your duty to do it if you are satisfied with the evidence for the prosecution."

The Court of Appeal noted yesterday that "no assistance whatever was given to the jury as to what would or would not be such good

ground". More damningly, the Court of Appeal stated that: "The killing of PC Miles had, very understandably, aroused widespread public sympathy for his family and a strong sense of public outrage at the circumstances."

"This background made it more, not less, important that the jury should approach the issues in a dispassionate spirit if the defendants were to receive a fair trial, as the trial judge began by reminding them."

"In our judgment, however, far from encouraging the jury to approach the case in a calm frame of mind, the trial's summing up had exactly the opposite effect. We cannot read these passages as other than a highly rhetorical and strongly worded denunciation of both defendants and their defences."

"The language was not that of a judge but of an advocate ... such a direction by such a judge must, in our view, have driven the jury to conclude that they had little choice but to convict."

Lord Bingham concluded: "It is with genuine diffidence that the members of this court direct criticism towards a trial judge widely recognised as one of the outstanding criminal judges of this century. But we cannot escape the duty of decision. In our judgment the summing up in this case was such as to deny the appellant that fair trial which is the birthright of every British citizen."

But the Court of Appeal did not accept that the police must necessarily have fabricated parts of their evidence, such as the phrase "Let him have it, Chris", as suggested by counsel for Bentley.

The judgment said: "We see nothing inherently improbable in the evidence given by any of the officers of what each heard and saw. It was for the jury to decide, having heard all the evidence, what was said and done and the significance of it. On the evidence presented to the court we conclude that a properly directed jury would have been entitled to convict. The case against the appellant was, as it seems to us, a substantial one, albeit not, in contrast to that against Craig, overwhelming."

"We reject the submissions that the officers' evidence of matters which incriminated the appellant, particularly the shout 'Let him have it, Chris', should be regarded as necessarily unreliable or invented."



Lord Bingham: judgment said Bentley's appeal should have succeeded

'Are you going to say [the officers] are conspicuous liars? — because if their evidence is untrue that Bentley called out "Let him have it Chris", those three officers are doing their best to swear away the life of that boy ... those three officers who on that night showed a devotion to duty for which they are entitled to the thanks of the community' — Lord Goddard.

'It is with genuine diffidence that the members of this court direct criticism towards a trial judge widely recognised as one of the outstanding criminal judges of this century. But we cannot escape the duty of decision. The summing up in this case was such as to deny the appellant that fair trial which is the birthright of every British citizen' — Lord Bingham



Lord Goddard: 'The police showed the highest gallantry'

Error that sealed fate of accused

THE JUDGE/ Misguided summing-up key to verdict

LORD Goddard, whose misguided summing-up in the trial of Derek Bentley led yesterday to the quashing of the conviction, had a favourite after dinner joke. He told how he had sentenced three men to hang, immediately after which a barrel organ in the street struck up the Eton Boating Song, which reminded him of the words "We'll all swing together ..."

It is as a hanging and flogging judge that the former lord chief justice will be best remembered. Born into a legal family in Notting Hill in London in 1877, Rayner Goddard was educated at Marlborough and Trinity College, Oxford, and was called to the Bar at the turn of the century.

When he was appointed a judge in 1932 and knighted, he was told by King George V at Buckingham Palace that he should not hesitate to sentence violent prisoners to be flogged. He took the advice to heart and vigorously opposed the abolition of flogging in 1948 and of hanging in 1967.

The late John Parris, one of the defence team in the Craig and Bentley trial, later wrote that Goddard had his own



reasons for such sentences: "His clerk told me that he used to take a spare pair of striped trousers round for Goddard because he knew that Goddard always had an ejaculation in his pants when sentencing a youth to be hanged or flogged."

His clerk also reported that the judge would buy boots for ragged young burglars and give money to other prisoners to help them make a fresh start.

In 1949, he jailed the editor of the Daily Mirror for contempt for printing facts about the case of acid bath murderer John George Haigh in advance of his trial. He was lord chief justice for 12 years and died in 1971.

"Michael is always pretty intense. There is nothing light-hearted about grand prix racing for him. He is there to win and nothing else."
Eddie Irvine on Schumacher

Sport98, page 2

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Price of £3m pile falls to £2.5m despite palatial extras

Mansour Namaki and his wife, Farbia, at home. Right: the outside of the building which boasts a designer kitchen and separate wings for servants and guests



Maev Kennedy
Heritage Correspondent

ANDREA Palladio may have been a genius but he had dreadful limitations as an architect. You can search every page of his seminal 1570 work, *I Quattro Libri Dell'Architettura*, without finding a single design for a decent jacuzzi, never mind a Poggenpohl kitchen.

And so now we have Palladio the House: a brand new second-hand Palladian

mansion, with jacuzzi and Poggenpohl, ballroom, swimming pool, gymnasium, and separate wings for guests and servants.

Richard Gaynor, of estate agents FPI Savills, calls it the first of the great houses of the new millennium.

"Footballers," said Alison Kendall, of joint agents Knight Frank, when asked who might be in the market for such a house, "footballers or showbusiness".

A hillside near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire,

was gouged away to level the site. The columns may be glass fibre but 150 tonnes of marble were imported from Crete for the floors, and the inlaid doors and mantelpieces were handmade in Italy. Palladio cost £3 million to build a year ago and will probably sell for £2.5 million.

As Mr Gaynor remarked: "I don't think anyone would expect there to be a profit margin in this sort of exercise."

This is rather bad news for Mansour Namaki, the

Iranian millionaire who built his dream home and had barely time to hang up his silk shirts before deciding to move to London with his wife and three young daughters.

Mr Namaki is big in town, very big. He came from Iran to study in 1975 and stayed. He and his wife, Farbia, both come from wealthy families, but he started his business with a £1,000 loan. He now supplies the toner for most of the photocopiers in Britain. He did not intend to

spend quite so much but it seemed a shame to cut corners, not to put heating under the acres of marble floors, a steam room as well as a sauna and two en suite bathrooms in the master bedroom.

Originally the site was a tiny house with a stunning view. In place of the 1,300 sq ft bungalow, he built the 18,000 sq ft Palladio. Once the local authority believed it was a private house and not a hotel, it was all for it. Really old houses are tricky. Michael Flatley, the

dancer, has just bought a Grade II listed Palladian mansion in London for a rumoured £4.7 million, but is obliged to spend another £1 million on improvements such as rebuilding the indoor pool to incorporating a grotto and waterfall.

Mr Namaki and his architect, Richard Baly, will build again in London. He said he would not touch an old house. "You always spend a lot of money but they're never right and always cold".

Gwyn Headley, of Pavilions of Splendour, an estate agency specialising in folies and many mansions in need of kindly new owners, finds it all rather sad. He is depressed the rich do not want either to buy the real thing or to commission a modern classic.

"In the 1930s, it was all Tudorbethan, now it's all Palladian, but it's the same failure of nerve. It is sad that clients who can afford this level never quite seem to have the nerve to commission a wonderful mod-

ern country house from Nick Grimshaw or one of the other brilliant young British architects."

Mr Headley does not have a Palladian mansion on his books at the moment — he sold one in Barnet, north London, for £1.35 million — but can offer a 1720 seven-bedroom house, three acres, swimming pool and coach house in Buckinghamshire for £800,000. "Really lovely house — just needs a pot of paint and some Osbornes & Little wallpaper, and you're away."

Sex-change recognition fight lost at Strasbourg

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

TWO transsexuals who were born male but fought a long battle for the right to be legally recognised as female, lost their cases by a narrow margin at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg yesterday.

Kristina Sheffield and Rachel Horsham claimed that Britain's refusal to allow transsexuals to alter their birth certificates and marry in their adopted sex, violated rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Britain is one of only four of the 40 signatories to the convention refusing to allow transsexuals to re-register their births to reflect a sex change. The others are Ireland, Andorra and Albania. Under British law, sex is determined at birth and cannot be changed, apart from where there are rare cases of ambiguous sexuality — where a newborn baby has been assigned the wrong sex.

Ms Sheffield and Ms Horsham had argued that the Government's refusal to accept their new status as women was a breach of their right to marry and to respect private and family life.

In March last year the European Commission of Human Rights gave an opinion backing their claim. But yesterday the judges decided by 11 votes to nine that there was no violation of their right to respect for private and family life, and by 18 votes to two that the right to marry was not breached in their case.

The two have no further avenue of appeal, but transsexuals hope that a reformed human rights court, with new judges, to be launched in November, will look more favourably on other cases.

Ms Sheffield, aged 51, from Ealing, west London, said: "Even Turkey gives legal recognition to transsexuals. So does South Africa. Countries that we accuse of breaches of human rights do it, but we won't."

"Two thousand people in this country are being subjected to ridicule every day

and it's not an offence against human rights."

She claimed her right to privacy was breached because she had had to disclose her original sex, when, for instance, attending court to stand surety for a friend, and applying for car insurance. She had to divorce her wife as a condition of having sex-change surgery, in 1988, and a court had denied her access to her daughter, saying contact was in the child's best interests. She has not seen her daughter for more than 12 years.

Ms Horsham, aged 52, who moved to the Netherlands from Britain in 1974, had surgery in Amsterdam in 1992. She has been issued with a birth certificate showing her new name and sex by the register of births in the Hague, but cannot get her original certificate amended in England. She lives with a male partner she plans to marry, but says the marriage, though valid in the Netherlands, would not be recognised in Britain.

The court ruled that Britain's refusal to recognise transsexuals in law came within the "margin of appreciation" allowing for states' different social and cultural mores. The harm to transsexuals from sometimes having to disclose their original sex was not serious enough to override this.

But the judges hinted that Britain ought to consider changing the law, noting that the Government had not taken any steps to review it, despite being urged to do so. John Wadham, director of the civil rights group Liberty, which backed the transsexuals' claim, said: "If the Government's commitment to human rights is as strong as it claims, it'll change the law."

Ms Sheffield, a former pilot named Ian, served in the RAF and in the Rhodesian Air Force and worked as a commercial pilot. Following recent court rulings that discrimination against transsexuals at work is unlawful, she won a sex discrimination claim against the freight cargo company Airfreight. The tribunal will decide on her compensation in September.



A workman finishes Edinburgh's new £3.5m mosque and Islamic centre opened today by Prince Adal Aziz Bin Fahd of Saudi Arabia

New austere Arts Council slashes National Lottery funds to projects

Don Gledhill
Arts Correspondent

WHAT had been expected to be the biggest National Lottery funded arts project outside London yesterday became the first casualty of the new Arts Council under chairman Gerry Robinson.

Bristol Harbourside, a £98 million arts centre project which had hoped for £52 million from the lottery, was told that it would get nothing. The council had previously given it £5 million from the lottery for feasibility studies.

Another high profile casualty following the first meeting of the slimmed down Arts Council was the Hackney Empire in east London, which had its bid for £38 million rejected, although it had also received £1.5 million towards a feasibility study.

Without lottery money it is doubtful whether either project will go ahead.

But there was good news for Brighton Dome, which gets £15 million towards a £22 million refurbishment. The other big winner among 14 schemes approved was the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television in Bradford, which received £1.9 million towards a £2.8 million upgrading of its 3-D projection system.

The nine-member council, which includes dancer Deborah Bull and sculptor Anish Kapoor, rushed through 136 applications in its two hour meeting. "This work-rate — more than one application per minute — contrasts with the previous practice of the council, where 23 members would spend an entire day, and sometimes two, considering an application."

The Bristol project reacted

to the verdict with dismay. "It's a complete surprise," said director Duncan Green. "We have been working in good faith since Lord Gower's announcement."

In September last year the then council chairman Lord Gower flew by helicopter to Bristol to launch the scheme, dubbing it a major landmark project and pivotal to the performing arts in the South-west.

Further assurances that the scheme would proceed were received from the council in March this year, shortly before Mr Robinson's arrival. "We believe we have fulfilled the Government's criteria for the arts of excellence, access, education, and linking artists and communities," said Mr Green. "As yet the Arts Council doesn't share the Government's vision."

The council countered that

foundered on three of eight criteria: financial viability and quality of management, partnership funding, and the quality of design and construction. The scheme had been designed by the architectural practice behind the Munich Olympic stadium.

The council also indicated that the Hackney Empire had been advised to reduce its £28 million bid, but had failed to do so. It failed on four of the eight counts.

Signalling a tough new approach to funding decisions, brought into focus by the grant of £78.5 million to the Royal Opera House redevelopment in November 1996, Mr Robinson said that from now on awards of the scale of the £15 million given to Brighton would be rare.

"Awards of this scale from now on will be made only in very exceptional circumstances," he said.

Limit on B6 vitamin sale is dropped

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

NICK BROWN, the Agriculture Minister, yesterday persuaded the first U-turn in his new job by dropping plans to restrict sales of vitamin B6, taken by 2 million women in Britain to relieve pre-menstrual tension.

The decision — slipped out in a parliamentary answer yesterday — postpones any restriction for up to two years, and holds out the possibility of no curb at all.

The announcement allows supermarkets which had anticipated the restrictions on sales, to restock their shelves with more than 500 products that had been temporarily withdrawn from sale.

Mr Brown's decision comes after more than 110,000 letters of protest to MPs from the public — the largest critical postbag since the row over beef on the bone and vying with complaints about the Child Support Agency.

In a strongly worded report last month, the Commons agriculture committee said the move was based on flawed and "scientifically unsubstantiated" evidence of a health risk with high dose pills.

The MPs accused those advising the Government of being stubborn, defensive, "curt to the point of rudeness" and palpably wrong in assessing the safety of high doses of the vitamin.

The MPs were allowed by Geoff Rooker, the agriculture

minister of state, access to 100 confidential reports examined by the Department of Health's advisers, the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, the MPs concluded the committee did not have criteria to distinguish between "good" and "bad" science.

They recommended that the government withdraw plans to limit sales of vitamin B6 to 10 milligrams a day, or 50 milligrams from pharmacists, with anything above requiring a prescription. Instead they recommended a voluntary limit of 100 milligrams a day and clear health warnings on the bottles — warnings are based on research in the United States which points to symptoms such as tingling, numbness and clumsiness associated with long term doses of 500mg or above.

Mr Brown has gone further. In a parliamentary reply to Ian Stewart, Labour MP for Eccles, he says: "We accept that there is a case for delaying any action on vitamin B6 until the new Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals has completed its consideration of the wider issue of the principles on which controls for ensuring the safety of vitamin and mineral supplements sold under food law can be based."

"This should take between 18 months and two years. In view of this we have concluded that a decision on legislation on the level of vitamin B6 in dietary supplements should be deferred until after the expert group has produced its report."

Test for Down's syndrome improves rate of detection

Gerard Seenan

A NEW method of determining whether a woman is at high risk of having a Down's syndrome baby may be up to 20 per cent more effective than current techniques, according to research published today.

Results of a study across Britain suggest that a new screening method based on the mother's age combined with ultrasound examination of neck swelling in the foetus could be 80 per cent effective. The best current technique is 60 per cent effective.

Increased efficiency in Down's screening methods will help reduce invasive amniocentesis procedures carried out in Britain each year. This procedure involves inserting a needle probe into the mother's womb and has a one in 200 risk of miscarriage.

Kypros Nicolaides, of the Fetal Medicine Foundation in London, who led the research, said the study showed the new technique was a significant advance. "It is a major improvement on previous methods because it allows the diagnosis of Down's syn-

drome much earlier in the pregnancy and we now know it to be a more reliable screening method," the professor said.

Initial findings suggest the test may also be of use in diagnosing some illnesses at the antenatal stage. Prof Nicolaides said ultrasound examination of foetal neck swelling could become an important tool in the diagnosis of heart abnormalities in foetuses.

The new test is being used in 200 centres in 41 countries. Prof Nicolaides says it could become the standard screening method in Britain. "For a technique to become widely used there must be sufficient available good quality equipment and operators. That equates to a properly trained and audited. I see no reason why that shouldn't happen."

Carol Boyes, director of the Down's Syndrome Association, said the findings, published in the *Lancet* medical journal, were a step forward, but there was still no method of being sure a foetus had Down's beyond invasive amniocentesis.

At 6ft 10in tall, weighing 23 stone and wearing size 16 shoes, Carl Myerscough is an 18-year-old who could put shot-putting back on the map.

Duncan Mackay on Britain's new hope

Sport98, page 2

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Righting wrongs of 'white' empire policy

MPs attack brutal forced migration of British children

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

MPs yesterday called on the Government to apologise to former child migrants shipped to far-flung parts of empire in a long-suppressed experiment in social engineering.

In a report on the scandal, which saw tens of thousands of British children despatched to former colonies as recently as the late 1960s, the Commons health select committee demanded urgent action to help the migrants trace surviving relatives and visit the land of their birth.

The report also called for the immediate opening of all files detailing the migrants' personal histories, and demanded payment of social security benefits to those visiting the UK to be reunited with their families.

The eight-month inquiry has brought to light the often harrowing history of a policy which took children from British orphanages and children's homes — often without their parents' knowledge or consent — and transplanted them to institutions mainly in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, where many suffered violence and sexual abuse.

Prominent charities, including Dr Barnardo's and National Children's Home, were among the agencies that sent the children overseas

with financial backing from the government.

At the report's launch yesterday MPs condemned the systematic mistreatment of the children who endured beatings, severe hunger and, in some cases, sexual abuse, frequently in institutions run by religious groups.

Evidence from former migrants and sending agencies confirmed that a racist motive underlay the scheme, which was portrayed as offering deprived children a better future in lands of opportunity. The government was willing to help populate former colonies with "good white stock", in exchange for easing the burden of supporting children in care.

One migrant described how, on arrival in Fremantle, Western Australia, he and other children were greeted by a clergyman who said: "It's nice to see you children here. Australia needs you. We need white stock... We are terrified of the Asian horde."

At a Commons press conference, MPs rebuffed suggestions from some charities involved in that the policy would have been judged acceptable by contemporary standards. Audrey Wise, deputy chairman of the committee, said: "It can't be claimed that this was in the best interests of the children even according to the standards of the time... In my own view what happened was a crass abuse of power."

The aim of the inquiry was not merely to expose a policy now condemned as "barbaric and dreadful" by Barnardo's, but to examine how former migrants could best be helped. The report does not recommend compensation, following fears from migrants that the legal efforts to apportion blame between governments and sending agencies would cause significant delays, jeopardising their efforts to contact often ageing relatives.

It calls for urgent moves to establish a central database to allow child migrants, some of whom had their names changed on arrival in their new country, to establish their true identities and trace relatives. If necessary, agencies should be compelled to reveal files. And it calls on the Government to establish a travel fund to allow former migrants to visit the UK.

The Australian federal government is urged to launch an inquiry into abuse allegations.

The report says some migrants felt an apology was irrelevant, but "we believe an apology is in order".

Health secretary Frank Dobson, whose department was responsible for the migration programme, told the committee during its inquiry he would look sympathetically at proposals to help former migrants. The Government has two months in which to respond.



A British child migrant at work on a farm in Australia. They were often abused

From the report:

It is impossible to resist the conclusion that some of what was done there was of a quite exceptional depravity, so that terms like sexual abuse are too weak to convey it. For example, those of us who heard the account of a man who as a boy was a particular favourite of some Christian Brothers at Tardun who competed as to who could rape him 100 times first, his account of being in terrible pain, bleeding and bewildered, trying to beat out his own eyes so they would cease being blue as the Brothers liked his blue eyes... will never forget it.

But if it were one account it could perhaps be dismissed as exceptional — unfortunately adult after adult described their suffering as children.

Many female child migrants also suffered severe abuse. Several of the girls in the Catholic orphanages told us of severe floggings with thick leather straps. One described being stripped naked at 15 in front of 50 other girls and savagely flogged, suffering unbearable pain and humiliation.

it on B6
min sale
ropped



Oxford movement... Gromit, Wallace and the trousers

Wallace's wrong accent

Sarah Hall

THEY have won two Oscars, been wooed by Hollywood, and had streets named after them. Not bad for a couple of Plasticine figures barely 10cm tall.

But, yesterday, the true appeal of Wallace and Gromit — the nation's most successful animation figures — became clear as it emerged that they present a picture of a very different Britain. MPs are calling for a debate over rumours that the hero's accent had been changed from broad Lancastrian to received pronunciation.

A new video of the Oscar-winning film, *The Wrong Trousers*, supposedly substituting Wallace's soft northern tones for "clipped Oxford accents", has led 15 MPs to sign an Early Day

Motion, stating they are "appalled" at the idea the dialect should alter to teach foreign students English.

The motion says the change is "an insult" to the North. The Lancashire-born Labour MP for Chorley, Lindsey Hoyle, said: "The whole history of Wallace and Gromit is based on the North. Why not leave them as they are and let people see there's an alternative to clipped English?"

But Aardman Animations, the company which produced Nick Park's three acclaimed films, insisted Wallace's accent — provided by last of the Summer Wine actor Peter Sallis — had not been altered. Simply, local colloquialisms were "explained".

Wallaceisms like "By 'eck Gromit!", and "cracking toast", remained but phrases such as "I'm down

to my last few coppers" became "We have only got a few pence", while "I'll get the bouncers", became "I can catch him".

Robert Maidment, video publishing manager at Oxford University Press, which has produced the video, released last week, said: "There's no sense we are trying to impose some sort of English accent. That would be appalling... the last thing Nick, who comes from Preston, would want. All we are trying to do is to make the original film understandable... It's been simplified because some of the phrases are just too impenetrable."

But Mr Hoyle remained suspicious. "They're still taking the traditional words the characters use away," he said. "It's the thin edge of the wedge."

Blacks in custody more likely than whites to die from 'police actions'

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

AT least 380 people have died in police custody since the 1990s — mostly as a result of suicide and drug abuse, according to Home Office research published yesterday.

The study covering the period between 1990 and 1996 reveals that 32 deaths were linked to police or other official action. It also confirms fears that deaths of black detainees are more likely to be linked to police action than those involving white suspects.

The report says that nearly half the deaths of black detainees since 1990 were linked to police actions or accidents where police were present. This compares with police involvement in 16 out of the 225 white deaths looked at by the researchers.

The study also reveals that the Metropolitan police have a worse record than any other force with a rate of 10 people dying in custody per 100,000 people arrested by its officers compared with a national average of just over two per 100,000 arrested. In London the rate of black deaths in custody at nine per 100,000 is three times higher than the national average.

The report was commissioned by the Home Office to look at the level of deaths in police custody. It concludes that "although the proportion of detainees who died and were black exceeded

the proportion of black people in the general population, this could partly be explained by their proportionately higher number of arrests."

The report says there may have been a difference in the ways in which white and black detainees died. It says a higher proportion of black than white detainees who died had taken drugs, had been restrained with cuffs or batons and were recorded as having reacted to restraint by struggling or becoming violent.

The Police Research Group report looked in detail at 277 of the 380 deaths in police custody recorded between 1990 and 1996. It also voices concern about the lack of police training in the treatment of detainees who are taken to police stations for their own safety — many just to be allowed to sleep it off. Over the seven years some 68 died directly from drug or alcohol abuse.

The report says that plans for detoxification centres ought to be given serious consideration in police areas dealing with large numbers of drunk detainees.

● The family of Wayne Douglas, whose death in police custody led to a riot in Brixton, south London, said they had been denied justice by a Court of Appeal ruling yesterday which dismissed a demand for a new inquest, *writes Anne Hinchey*.

The Master of the Rolls, Lord Woolf, said in a judgment that the coroner had misdirected the jury on the definition of unlawful killing.

but that did not mean that the verdict of accidental death should be quashed. He said it would be expensive to hold a new inquest, particularly given that it was "most unlikely" to produce a different verdict.

The decision came as a blow to Lisa Douglas-Williams, Mr Douglas's sister who has headed the campaign to have the verdict overturned.

She said: "My family believe we have been denied justice. We are particularly upset by the judge's remarks about the expense of holding a further inquest. A proper verdict on my brother's death is far more important than money. We feel, like the Lawrence family, that justice has been excluded from British justice."

Wayne Douglas, aged 25, died in December 1995 after being repeatedly held by police face down with his hands cuffed behind his back.

He was arrested by several officers on suspicion of having robbed a young couple at knife-point. After being disarmed he was placed face down in the back of a police van. In the police station he was also left face down until he was moved into a cell where he was again kept face down. Police said he complained that he was finding it hard to breathe, and the handcuffs were removed and he was turned on to his back. He died later of heart failure.

The family's solicitor, Louise Christian, said they would take the case to the House of Lords.

Calderdale authority given deadline to improve

Minister threatens schools takeover

Vivak Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

CALDERDALE education authority, criticised recently for its poor management of schools and pupils, has been given a deadline of six weeks to improve or face being run by officials sent by the Department of Education.

The announcement yesterday by Estelle Morris, the school standards minister, follows a troubled period for the West Yorkshire authority. In 1996, inspectors temporarily closed the Ridings school in Halifax following complaints from pupils and parents that discipline had broken down.

A recent Ofsted report found that 30 per cent of children attending Calderdale schools left without any qualifications.

Ms Morris said: "I cannot allow any LEA to fail in its duty to raise educational standards for the children in its charge."

"It is clear that efforts to improve standards across

Calderdale are being undermined by an ineffective senior management team. I am therefore asking Calderdale to report to me by September 14 on how they plan to remedy the failings identified by Ofsted, including what specific action they will take."

The deadline could see Calderdale become the first LEA to be run by central government.

A parliamentary order in September will bring in new powers under the School Standards and Framework Act allowing ministers to appoint an agent to assume a local education authority's powers.

School inspectors were first sent into Calderdale following the crisis at the Ridings. The recent Ofsted report found that the LEA failed to consult schools over important decisions and that there was a bad working relationship between members and officers.

Ms Morris said the report had identified areas where progress had been made. But she added: "This is not enough to deliver the improvements in services and

performance necessary to raise standards so that Calderdale pupils can fulfil their potential."

A Calderdale LEA spokesman said: "The latest report praised the work of the local authority, but also highlighted what were improvements were required. The report presents a number of challenges and the council will be looking at the most appropriate way to address them."

David Hart, leader of the National Association of Head Teachers said his members would be happy to see action being taken. "It looks as if this is the last chance saloon for Calderdale, and unless they put their house in order there is a very real chance that someone else will be asked to run an education service which addresses the needs of schools."

A Department for Education and Employment spokesman said the deadline did not necessarily mean there would be widespread sackings of senior managers. "It is up to Calderdale to decide how they take this forward."

News in brief

Child death driver free

THE driver of a beach train which ran over and killed a six-year-old child walked free from court yesterday after the judge said the mental illness he was suffering, which was brought on by the accident, would be his sentence for the rest of his life.

Brendan Conlon, 60, from Gresham Road, Middlesbrough, received a two-year suspended sentence at Teesside crown court after he admitted causing the death by dangerous driving of Alexander Waverley, from Stockton, on Redcar beach in May last year.

Police discovered that Mr Conlon had limited peripheral vision and had been told in 1979 that he should not drive.

Paracetamol may aid health

PARACETAMOL may help protect against strokes and heart attacks by preventing hardening of the arteries, it was claimed yesterday.

The results of a study presented at a medical conference in Munich, Germany, suggested it can lessen the likelihood of cholesterol plaque building up on artery walls.

The study suggests that the drug may act as an anti-oxidant, inhibiting the oxidation of certain fatty proteins which carry the "bad" form of cholesterol.

Oxidation of these substances is one of the main processes involved in the formation of plaque and hardening of the arteries.

Judge names jailed mother

A JUDGE at Nottingham crown court yesterday lifted an order preventing the naming of Rhara Martin, aged 27, of Grimsby, who on Wednesday was jailed for 10 years for the manslaughter of her four-year-old son Philip.

Brothers face new charges

THE Pearce brothers, accused of the Mardi Gras bombing campaign, faced new charges at Horseferry Road magistrates' court yesterday.

The brothers, aged 56, a tailor, and Edgar, aged 60, a jobless carpenter and electrician, both of Chiswick, west London, have been in custody for almost three months.

Three charges have been withdrawn, but they now face, variously, counts relating to explosives, blackmailing, J Sainsbury and Barclaycard, and demanding money and cashcards with threats.

Most new cars 'easy to steal'

NEARLY all new cars are easy prey for thieves, according to figures out yesterday. Five out of 75 new cars passed Home Office anti-theft guidelines in tests conducted by What Car? magazine. The ones to pass were the Jaguar XJ6, BMW 231i Touring, BMW 730i, BMW 318i and Volvo C70.

Least secure were the Daihatsu Terios, Subaru Forester, Daihatsu Grand Move and Seat Cordoba Vario SXE.

The guidelines require a vehicle's locking system to resist attack from a thief for two minutes. Its immobilisation should prevent the car from being driven away for a further five minutes.

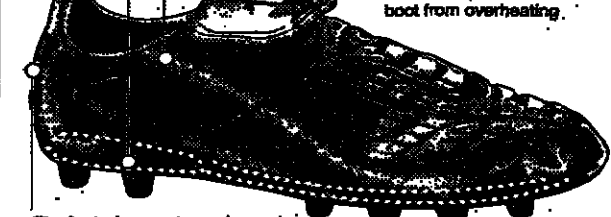
Hot boots make cold feet merely pre-match nerves

Stuart Miller

Heat for feet

Batteries in heel have capacity to last for 90 minutes. They power a heating element built into the sole, which is activated when the boot is worn.

A control and thermostat switch will prevent the boot from overheating.



The batteries can be recharged via a socket in the back of the heel

allows the wearer to turn down the temperature.

The maker, S Reed and Co of Blackburn in Lancashire, developed the boots as a spin-off from the heated shoes it makes for people suffering from circulation or rheumatoid arthritis. The firm says it has tested the boots on "top players".

Though they will retail

for 240 more than a normal pair, the company expects the boots to be a massive success — especially in the colder North of England and Scotland.

If the idea takes off, the company has tested heated socks and also heated wellington boots for building sites; it is further considering electric shorts and shirts.

education

Every Tuesday in the

The Guardian

8 WORLD NEWS

News in brief

Angola mass graves found after attack

THE United Nations has uncovered mass graves in Angola containing the bodies of 105 people killed in an attack last week in remote Lunda Norte province, the UN observer mission's spokesman in the country said yesterday.

The victims were found in eight graves in the village of Mbula. They had been killed with knives, machetes and guns. The Angolan government blames the former rebel group Unita for the attack on July 22, which it says left 215 people dead. Unita claims the people were slaughtered by diamond gangsters, but the UN spokesman said all the survivors corroborated the government's version. — Reuters, Luanda.

Suicide bid for immortality

A GERMAN tourist jumped to his death from the observation deck of the 613ft Cairo Tower after telling a friend that he expected to be resurrected, police said yesterday.

When he threw himself off the modern tower on Tuesday, Adam Goltz, a 34-year-old student of ancient Egyptian history from Baden Württemberg, was trying to demonstrate to Sarah Kliner his Pharaonic belief that the dead return to life, a police official said. — AP, Cairo.

Witness defies truth tribunal

SOUTH Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission began its last day of human rights hearings this morning uncertain whether it would succeed in questioning the architect of apartheid's chemical and biological warfare programme, Wouter Basson.

The commission chairman, Dumisa Ntsebeza, yesterday accused Dr Basson of "holding us in unmitigated contempt", after he refused to answer questions about the programme, which included such objectives as introducing cholera into Mozambican water.

The commission is due to wind up its work on human rights today and report by October, though its amnesty hearings — dealing with perpetrators from the apartheid era who can avoid prosecution by giving evidence — will continue. — Alex Duval Smith, Cape Town.

French air crash kills 14

FOURTEEN people were killed when two light aircraft collided in mid-air near the western French city of Lorient yesterday. One of the planes was flying from Lyon to Lorient. The cause of the collision was not immediately known. — Reuters, Lyon.

Woman 'awake in surgery'

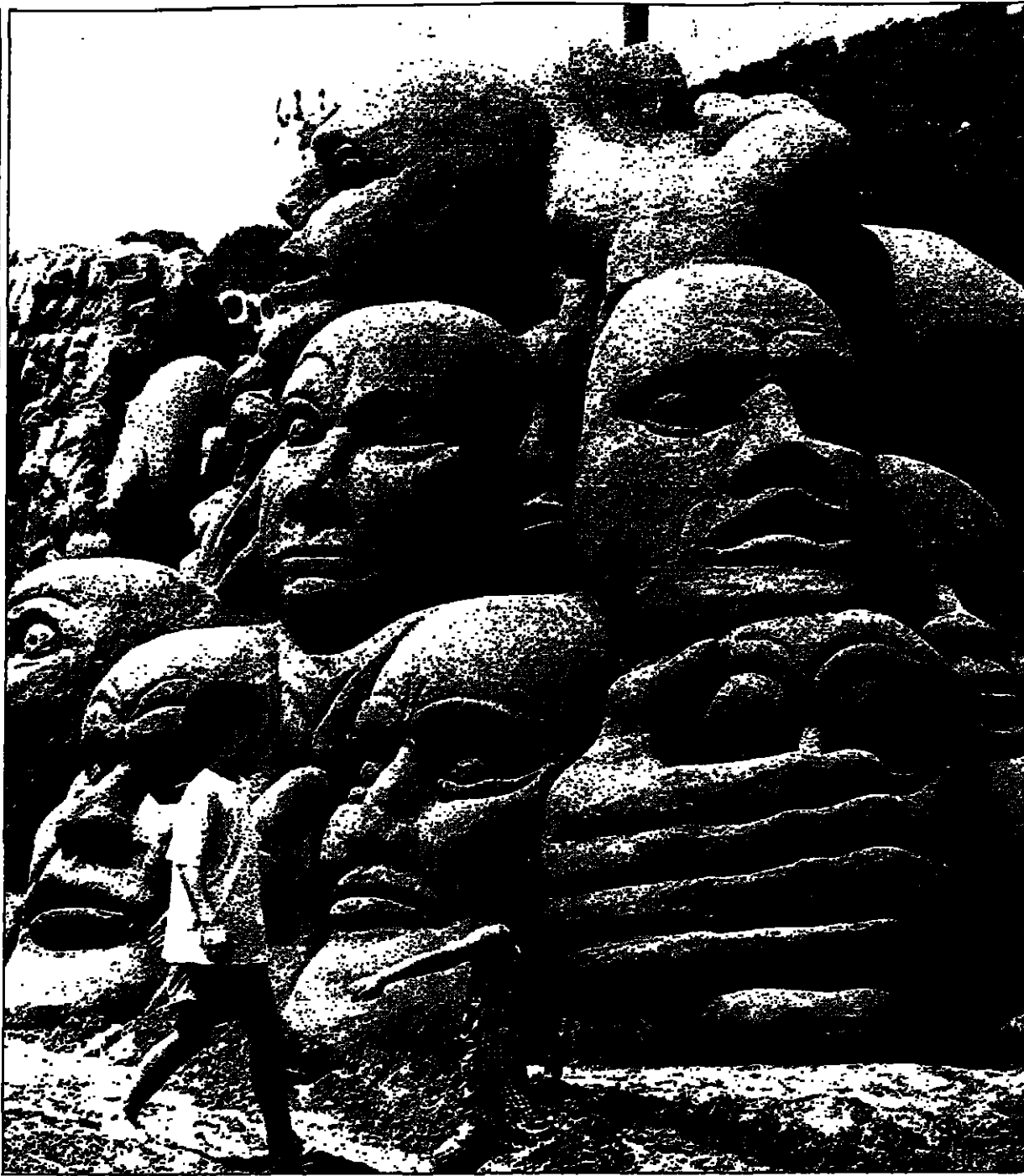
A VIRGINIA woman who woke up during surgery but was unable to complain about the pain she was enduring has won \$150,000 (\$30,000) in a malpractice lawsuit against her anaesthetist.

Jeanne Smith, aged 48, said she woke up during an operation in 1985, and could make out a bright light shining in her face. But with a breathing tube down her throat and immobilised by drugs, she could not alert doctors, who were carrying out a hysterectomy — all of which she could feel. The anaesthetist, David Carney, admitted that the drug meant to keep Ms Smith asleep had run out without him noticing. — AP, Newport News, Virginia.

EU threatens Spanish hunters

AFTER taking on the bird hunters of France earlier this summer, the European Commission yesterday set its sights on Spanish marksmen, accusing them of shooting migrating birds out of season.

Officials in Brussels have threatened the Spanish government with court action unless it acts swiftly to prevent peasants in the south of the country from shooting turtle doves and quail in defiance of European Union regulations. Although Spain has signed the EU's nature conservation regulations, the commission claims that local magistrates allow the issuing of hunting permits, and that legal enforcement of bans often comes too late to stop the birds being killed. — Stephen Bates, Brussels.



Faces illustrating the "Hell of Rush Hour" stare out at the 10th beach festival in Kamakura, west of Tokyo, yesterday. About 32 sand arts, including this one by Tokyo Institute of Polytechnics students, are on show. PHOTOGRAPH: KIKI SASAHARA

Indonesia bids tourists Happy Day

John Aglionby in Jakarta

INDONESIA'S tourist industry was happy yesterday — whether it felt like being or not. The government declared it "Happy Day", ordering all hotels to provide free accommodation, an evening meal and excursions to visitors arriving from overseas.

The tourism minister, Marzuki Usman, said the day, part of a "Let's Go Indonesia" campaign, was a

"grand gesture of goodwill to the world". It was announced only the day before.

"We want people around the world to know that Indonesia's travel and tourism industry is ready to welcome them back," he said.

In the past 12 months, forest fires, smog, riots and political upheaval have crippled the industry, and cheaper prices caused by the rupiah's 80 per cent devaluation have failed to offset the damage.

Arrivals in the first half

of this year were half those last year, at 1.3 million. The visitors spent only \$250 million. Last year 5.2 million visitors spent \$2.1 billion. The Indonesian Tourist Promotion Agency, reportedly millions of pounds in debt, has closed all seven overseas offices.

Although Indonesia has calmed down since riots in mid-May, many people are buying guns on the black market to defend themselves against muggers and burglars. A shop in the

west Java city of Bandung said it had sold more than 2,000 steel and leather chastity belts since reports that 168 women were raped in May.

The Happy Day freebies for the 15,000 visitors estimated to have arrived yesterday are expected to cost about \$3.1 million.

Ida Mahrita, of the Bali Hyatt hotel, said: "We are running at 50 per cent, so I suppose to help out the government like this once in a blue moon is OK."

Junta ends Suu Kyi's car protest

Nick Cunniff-Bruce in Phnom Penh and Ian Black in London

THE confrontation between Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's military junta gathered momentum yesterday as the democracy leader accused the generals of kidnapping her to prevent her campaigning for freedom of movement.

Her defiance, boosted by support from Western governments, came a day after security men grabbed her in the car she had occupied for six days after they had stopped her travelling to the provinces and forced her to drive back to Rangoon.

"I was kidnapped", a member of her National League for Democracy quoted Ms Suu Kyi as saying. "They even stole my car."

The junta's action drew a stinging rebuke — the second this week — from the United States secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, as "an unacceptable violation of her human rights" which would "only contribute to the further isolation of Burma".

In London, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, also described interference with Ms Suu Kyi's movements as "unacceptable" and called for "immediate dialogue" with her National League for Democracy party (NLD). Burma's ambassador to Britain has been summoned to the Foreign Office next week.

Security agents stopped Ms Suu Kyi on the road after she left the capital last Friday, placing sandbags, barbed wire and soldiers in front of her car to stop her visiting supporters in the provinces.

She refused to answer their questions or meet with authorities about her freedom to travel. Military agents blocked two earlier attempts by her to travel outside Rangoon this month, on the pretext that she had left without a security detail.

Ms Suu Kyi's protest became one of the major talking points at a conference of Asia-Pacific foreign ministers in the Philippines. Burma's representative at the meeting, Ohn Gyaw, faced tough questioning on government policies that Ms Albright condemned as "not of dialogue but denial".

The end of the protest came on Wednesday night when agents grabbed her as she lay on the back seat of the car,

nursing a temperature of 104F. They evicted two colleagues from the front and drove it back to Rangoon. She tried to call a press conference there but the authorities blocked it.

The junta, taking the part of good Samaritans, claimed it acted on the advice of her doctor and some followers in the party. "She may not like what we did to her now but she will be grateful in future," a spokesman said.

It seems the junta acted to end a protest that had become a growing diplomatic and public relations embarrassment, and from concern about the repercussions if anything happened to Ms Suu Kyi. Ms Albright warned earlier this week that the US would hold the junta responsible for her health and safety.

Diplomats in Rangoon reported mid-week that Ms Suu Kyi's food supply was running out and her health was suffering. Her party's

"She may not like what we did to her now but she will be grateful in future," the junta said

vice-president, Tin Oo, said yesterday the Nobel Peace Prize winner, aged 53, was "very, very weak" after her protest.

A regional human rights organisation, Alternative Asian Network, condemned the restrictions on her freedom of movement but expressed relief that she had returned to Rangoon. "The point has been made," it said.

"She was representing the aspirations of millions of freedom-loving people in Burma," Ms Suu Kyi's determination to assert her freedom of movement is only one of the challenges worrying the junta as Burma approaches the tenth anniversary of the pro-democracy uprising bloodily suppressed by the military.

The regime is wary of possible student unrest, after setting a date next month for exams that should have taken place at the end of the 1996-97 academic year, only to be stalled by campus agitation.

Ms Suu Kyi has also set an August deadline for convening the parliament elected in the 1990 elections which the NLD won by a landslide.

When is yesterday's scandal tomorrow's good news?

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Tough start for a weak leader

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

KEIZO Obuchi, a politician who has made almost no impression on policy in his more than 35-year career, became the 54th prime minister of Japan yesterday.

His "reconstruction cabinet" consists largely of elderly and colourless figures, but he surprised the country by appointing the youngest minister since the second world war, Seiko Noda, aged 37. As posts and telecommunications minister, she is the only woman in the cabinet.

The team faces the chal-

lenge of reviving the world's second largest economy, which is suffering its worst recession for more than 50 years. While Mr Obuchi will have to keep one eye on the financial markets — which doomed his predecessor, Ryutaro Hashimoto — he will also have to fend off a strong challenge from the opposition and guard against growing disaffection within his own Liberal Democratic Party.

The scale of the political obstacles that Mr Obuchi will face was apparent in yesterday's parliamentary vote for



Keizo Obuchi: Japan's new prime minister



Kiichi Miyazawa: Finance Minister close to the US



Seiko Noda: The youngest minister, and only woman

a prime minister. While the lower house elected Mr Obuchi, ensuring him of the post, the weaker upper chamber registered its hostility by selecting an alternative candidate, Nobuo Kan, the charismatic leader of the Democratic Party of Japan.

The showdown bodes ill for the government's chances of rapidly enacting crucial bills to stabilise the financial system. Several ruling party politicians have predicted that the administration will not last beyond the autumn.

Mr Obuchi also faced prob-

lems in forming a cabinet. His two rivals in the recent leadership campaign, Seiichi Kajiyama and Junichiro Koizumi, both refused posts and there have been signs they may be building up their own anti-leadership power bases.

Mr Obuchi, keen to offset his lack of economic expertise, has persuaded a reluctant Kiichi Miyazawa, a former prime minister, aged 78, to become finance minister. Mr Miyazawa's appointment has been welcomed by the markets because he is close to Washington.

Guru urges Japan to say no to US

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo meets a crusader against the 'West's financial war on Asia'

EVEN before the new Japanese government considers how to tackle the recession, the retired politician Shintaro Ishihara believes they will miss the point. Instead of the tax cuts and fiscal stimulus measures demanded by Washington, he says, they should concentrate on the financial war waged against Asia by the West.

"We are currently seeing a peculiar situation in which the world's biggest creditor nation, Japan, is in the midst of a crisis, while the world's biggest debtor nation, the United States, is enjoying success. Why has this situation developed? Because we have followed the US strategy like slaves."

It is not the first time Mr Ishihara, aged 65 and a na-

tionalist, has urged a tough stand against Washington. In 1989 his best-selling book, *The Japan that Can Say No*, co-written with the Sony chairman, Akio Morita, seemed to herald a more assertive country.

He later joined the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, in predicting that Asia's superior values would drive the region's combined gross national product ahead of the US and Europe by 2000.

Such boasts now seem laughable. Asia's currencies and stock markets have nose-dived and corruption has been exposed.

Mr Ishihara, however, is unrepentant. He blames Asia's economic malaise on Japanese bureaucrats who covered up trillions of yen

in bad loans, and a financial system designed to serve US interests.

He says: "My friend Mahathir has understandably been angry at [George] Soros, whose hedge-fund speculation has caused financial turmoil in South-east Asia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. But Soros is only a running dog of the new US financial strategy."

That strategy is a three-wave attack. "First, West-

ern hedge-funds start a financial panic; next, firms like Moody's and Standard and Poors act like an artillery barrage to soften up local firms by cutting their credit ratings; finally, it comes the IMF [International Monetary Fund], which is essentially a US institution, to ensure that US investors are protected."

This conspiracy theory has emerged in most Asian countries affected by the crisis. With Japan in the doldrums, Mr Ishihara argues, investors are moving

their capital to the US, pushing up equity prices on Wall Street and ensuring that US pension funds make strong profits. Imports of cheap Asian goods have helped keep inflation low.

This much is widely accepted. Where Mr Ishihara, a ruling Liberal Democratic Party MP until his retirement from politics a few years ago, departs is in proposing setting up a new Asian reconstruction bank, introducing new Japanese financial products, selling off US securities and raising interest rates. "If we do that, America will collapse," he says.

Mr Ishihara admits, only half jokingly, that his feeling toward the US is "hostility". His views, which place a disturbing emphasis on race, are seen as extreme. But they are far from unique, and if bankruptcies and unemployment continue to increase, they are likely to spread.

Fugitive attack



Rescue at disaster

R

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ta ends
Kyri's
protest

The Guardian Friday July 31 1998

WORLD NEWS 9

Fugitive Briton linked to Dutch child porn attacks 'witchhunt' from Prague refuge

Kate Connolly in Prague and Owen Bowcott

THE fugitive child kidnapper Warwick Spinks, once described as Britain's most wanted paedophile, has been discovered running an accommodation agency for foreign visitors in Prague.

Mr Spinks, aged 34, whose name has been linked to the international paedophile network uncovered by Dutch police last week, has been on the run since he refused to sign the sex offenders' register after his release from prison in Kent a year ago.

His refuge in Prague highlights the growth of the sex trade in eastern Europe and its secretive underground connections. Determined never to return to Britain, Mr Spinks claims those convicted of under-age sex offences are being subjected to a modern-day witchhunt.

Mr Spinks, a nephew of the Olympic boxer Terry Spinks, is unashamed of having employed male prostitutes on canal boats in Amsterdam. He told the Guardian: "All I was doing was running a legally licensed brothel which was controlled by the state and underwent regular checks."

The youths were aged 18, he claimed — above the age of consent in the Netherlands.

In 1993 Mr Spinks was arrested and subsequently convicted of drugging and abducting a 14-year-old boy who had been taken to Amsterdam and sold to a gay brothel but escaped. He served 40 months of a five-year term.

Breaking his parole, he fled to Prague and other capitals, including Moscow, Berlin, Casablanca and Johannesburg. Contacts in the Czech Republic allowed him to start a new life with a flat and a business. "Never again will I return to Britain," he said.

Mr Spinks's business, called Prague Connections, is an accommodation agency for foreign visitors. He rents rooms, he said, to "heterosexual yuppies, occasional gay couples and even policemen".

Allegations of his involvement with the Dutch paedophile network emerged when his name was discovered among details of child porn customers in a police raid on the Amsterdam flat of Gary Ulrich, a member of the ring murdered a few weeks ago. Mr Spinks's name also appeared among the possessions of the Belgian Robbe van der Planken, a leader of the ring which traded thousands of pictures showing sexual abuse of children and infants via the Internet.

Mr Spinks denies involvement. "I've been on the gay scene since I was 15 or 16 years old. During that time I've met many types of people. But just because they've found my name in someone's address book, does that mean I'm a paedophile? I've never been invited to join in a ring."

"I don't know anything about these Dutch men. If I do, I met them in a bar somewhere. I think I've known two Robbies — one owned a business in central Amsterdam and the other was a Belgian guy I used to meet with in Amsterdam. As far as the police are concerned it's a case of guilt by association with me, as I'm a convicted criminal."

He has not been in Amsterdam for six years, he added. "The Dutch police... are on my side and resent the constant attacks on them by the British, who twist facts just because they want to destroy Dutch liberalism."

Mr Spinks denied involvement in reported snuff movies, in which children are murdered on camera, saying they were no more than "a figment of police imagination. Such things don't exist."

He said: "This is a sad, a witchhunt of the '80s and '90s, and gay people like myself are the flavour of the month. The police are just pissed off because I never admitted my guilt. I'm like a loose cannon, because I wouldn't admit to what I'd done and sign the register."

The Home Office in London confirmed Mr Spinks had breached the terms of his parole. Those who fail to sign on the sex offenders' register face up to six months in prison.

Mr Spinks claimed to lead a "quiet, boring life" in Prague. He said: "I'm not a Scene Queen. Not a camp thing. I enjoy a pint in a pub and I don't go to nightclubs."

But he has reportedly been seen in two gay nightspots — the L-Club and Connections. Both are cheap and underground, with cameras mounted in the toilets. They attract a mainly middle-aged, foreign clientele in search of local teenage boys for sex. Many of the Czech youths appear to be under 15, the legal age of consent.

The clubs are the first port of call for well-heeled sex tourists who, tiring of tradi-

tional haunts in Thailand and the Philippines, are increasingly visiting Prague, the new discount-sex supermarket where laws are lax and Aids is still relatively uncommon.

The Czech police say they are not aware of Mr Spinks's presence in the country. Jiri Kantur, head of the department of crime by or against juveniles, admits it will take years to create an effective strategy for fighting paedophilia.

"Money is power, particularly here where people don't have much. There are plenty of boys willing to do almost anything so they can buy the latest pair of Nikes, and there are plenty of men who are rich and willing to pay them. It's a paedophile paradise."

A former BBC Radio 1 disc jockey, Chris Denning, aged 37, is among those in Prague's Prague prison awaiting trial for paedophilia. Jailed for 10 weeks in 1996 for possessing child pornography, he is alleged to have regularly had sex with boys as young as seven.

Warwick Spinks: Broke parole and has surfaced in Prague

Richard Boudreaux in Malisevo

THE Yugoslav government has been showing off its biggest trophy from five months of fighting in Kosovo — a ghost town that served as the stronghold of ethnic Albanian separatists.

The rebels and the last of Malisevo's 35,000 or more ethnic Albanian inhabitants left the town a few hours before the arrival on Tuesday of Serbian paramilitary police and Yugoslav army tanks.

Mazrek Jaha, aged 80, the only Albanian seen in the town on Wednesday, said the apparently orderly retreat from a huge, five-day government assault was bloodless.

"They heard explosions from over there," he said, pointing toward hills on the eastern horizon. "Then they left. Ran away to the woods. All of them."

The loss of Malisevo was a staggering, but not fatal, blow



Warwick Spinks: Broke parole and has surfaced in Prague



An ethnic Albanian family flee their home near Malisevo, Kosovo, after Serbian forces with tanks broke guerrilla defences

Fleeing rebels cede ghost HQ to Serbs

Richard Boudreaux in Malisevo

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The loss of Malisevo was a staggering, but not fatal, blow

to the Kosovo Liberation Army. It marched unchallenged into this placid farming town three months ago and turned it into a bustling military headquarters for the world's fastest-growing guerrilla force — one that eventually over-extended itself.

"They are not a strong, well-organised army," said Major Bozidar Filip, a Serbian police officer. "As soon as their first

line of defence broke, they ran away... We never expected it would be so easy."

The civilian exodus was the largest single displacement of people since the conflict began. Until this week, the fighting had made 147,000 people homeless, including 40,000 who have left the province, according to the United Nations.

One foreign official said he saw "tractor load after tractor load" of refugees moving through the Drenica valley, 10 miles to the north, on Wednesday. Others were seen heading south, while some were believed to be sleeping nearby in the forests.

The flight was no surprise. Since fighting began last winter, government forces have shelled, looted and burned parts of nearly every village they have occupied. More than 400 people have been killed.

But Malisevo has survived unscathed. There were no bullet-scarred walls and little spent ammunition. Only a few shops in town had been looted. — Los Angeles Times.

Belgrade says attack is over

SLOBODAN Milosevic, the Yugoslav president, told European Union envoys in Belgrade yesterday that the offensive against rebels in Kosovo was over.

But the envoys were shocked at the devastation they witnessed on a tour of the province, suggesting excessive use of force by government troops. — Reuters, Belgrade.

Rescue hopes at disaster pit

Kate Connolly and Agencies in Lassing, Austria

RESCUERS hope to reach 10 Austrian miners trapped in a collapsed pit for 13 days in the next day or two, the economics minister, Johann Farnleitner, said yesterday.

In Lassing, rescuers drilled deeper into the magnesium silicate mine after hearing noises on Wednesday indicating that the men might be alive.

"Everything is being carried out as quickly and safely as possible," Mr Farnleitner told a news conference in Vienna. "We hope to reach the cavities in the next day or two."

The miners were caught in a massive mudslide after they descended into the pit on July 17 to rescue their colleague Georg Hainzl, who had been trapped by a cave-in a few hours earlier.

Efforts to reach them were redoubled on Sunday after Mr Hainzl, aged 24, was pulled alive from the pit in surprisingly good health, despite his 10-day ordeal without food and water.

All hope of finding the miners alive had been abandoned more than a week ago amid confusion among rescuers and mine safety authorities.

A huge crater has swallowed the heart of the village, dragging with it houses, part of a road, and the fathers of 16 village children.

The enthusiasm of rescue teams was not matched by the progress of drills directed towards the cavern where the men are believed to be buried. They are penetrating a mere 31m hour.

The men are 400ft underground, and believed to have enough oxygen to last them for 12 and a half days.

The rescue effort is now being concentrated on a 25ft-high underground dome, lying 340ft north-west of where Mr Hainzl was found.

The plan is two-pronged. One thin drill is being used to access the cavern and deliver extra air and food. Another larger drill is concentrating on excavating a potential rescue passage.

Georg Plaschke, the leader of the rescue team of hundreds of firemen, soldiers and miners, said yesterday that hope of finding the men alive depended on whether or not they received the extra air.

"We are doing all that is humanely possible to find these men. We will keep digging until we find them," he said.

When asked what he would do if the men were found dead, he shrugged and answered, "Cry".

A report in the weekly magazine News that rescue workers had heard the sounds of knocking a week ago, has provoked angry responses from locals, who insist that drilling for the men should have begun much sooner.

Mr Plaschke replied that teams first had to pump out hundreds of thousands of gallons of water, which filled the crater after a river diverted its course. Geological conditions, including the build-up of mud and old tunnels had also hindered progress.

Yesterday evening an American mining expert, Jeffrey Kravitz, from the Mine Safety and Health Administration Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, arrived in Lassing, bringing with him a special infra-red device to help locate the trapped men.

Mr Plaschke said that personally he was sceptical that the device would work, because the magnesium silicate would deflect signals.

Rescuers are working up to 40 hours at a time. They expect to reach the men tomorrow at the earliest.

Suicide scoop angers Belgians

Stephen Bates in Brussels on the latest in a long line of press excesses

THE ETHICS of Belgian journalists were under investigation last night after a magazine carried an interview with a family it knew, by the time it ran the article, had committed suicide.

Roasting of its scoop in publishing the interview with people now dead, the Flemish television listings magazine Humo printed more than six pages of conversation between the Goossens family and a journalist, Ingrid de Bie. There was talk during the interview of possible suicide.

The family killed themselves on July 22, five days after speaking to Ms De Bie. The magazine appeared on Tuesday this week.

The bodies of Leo Goossens, his wife Erna, their daughter An, an air hostess aged 24, and their son Bob, aged 19, were found in wood near their home in the village of Kasterlee outside Antwerp. The parents apparently shot their children and then shot themselves.

The case is not only the most recent grisly tragedy to afflict Belgium but appears to be the latest in a long line of excesses in the country, committed in the name of investigative journalism — the Goossens had a long-running dispute with a landlord.

The scandal has centred on whether Ms De Bie alerted local officials to the family's threat to kill themselves, after she had obtained her story. The magazine insisted it had informed the local civic authorities, who had decided, on police advice, not to intervene.

But Eric van Rompuy, a Flemish regional government minister, demanded that the Belgian journalists' association investigate whether any ethical codes

were broken. He said: "It is commercial exploitation of a family drama. We need to see whether everyone lived up to their responsibilities."

The cause of the tragedy appears to have been a series of disputes stretching back 25 years, first over the design of a house the family had wanted to build and the father as saying, "I have thought about using a gun... all sorts of situations that you would find in a horror book have been going through my thoughts."

Belgian newspapers and magazines have gone all-out in recent years to catalogue the authorities' failings in investigating unsolved crimes, and have not hesitated to break embargoes on sensitive information.

With the state authorities widely despised and ridiculed by the public, journalists have received little criticism for intrusive reporting.

Television has been just as insensitive: at the funerals of two eight-year-old girls abducted and subsequently killed by the paedophile Marc Dutroux, camera crews held up the procession while they obtained their pictures, and even lay on the ground to get better shots of the coffins being placed in the hearses.

Previously undisclosed details of the post-mortem on one of the girls were read to her parents on a live television show last year.

Journalists admit that libel laws have fallen out of use and contempt of court regulations are ignored.

Ms De Bie was yesterday said by colleagues to be out of her office, conducting an interview and unavailable for comment.

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Bill Clinton boards Marine One, the presidential helicopter, in Washington yesterday as the evidence against him mounted

Dress builds Starr's case

Mark Tran in Washington

THE FBI is reported to have found a dress in the White House which may be evidence against President Clinton in the case of Monica Lewinsky.

The revelation that Kenneth Starr, the special prosecutor investigating a range of Mr Clinton's past activities, has physical evidence against which to test the president's denial of a sexual relationship has added to the prosecutor's arsenal for his imminent showdown with the US leader.

According to press reports, the dress was found in the White House. It is a blue dress which was found in the White House. It is a blue dress which was found in the White House.

immunity. If there is any doubt on the dress, it would take just a day to determine whether there was enough to submit for DNA testing and a forensic analysis.

President Clinton has agreed to testify to the Starr team on video on August 17; that tape will then go to the grand jury.

The alleged affair is under investigation because Mr Starr is trying to prove that Mr Clinton sought to engineer a cover-up of the relationship — perhaps even to the extent of obstructing justice — and that cover-ups were part of a pattern dating back to the Clintons' ill-fated Whitewater property dealings in Arkansas. The Starr inquiry was set up in 1994 to look into Whitewater.

The telephone messages Ms Lewinsky gave to Mr Starr are reported not to contain romantic or suggestive remarks, but they could be seen as evidence of unusual familiarity. Now that she has her immunity deal, Ms Lewinsky is expected to begin testimony next week.

An NBC-Wall Street Journal poll taken after the president received a subpoena from Mr Starr last week showed a 54 per cent approval rating of the way Mr Clinton is doing his job.

But it also showed a hardening of opinion on impeachment. Of those questioned, 45 per cent said that Mr Clinton should be the target of impeachment proceedings if he is found to have committed perjury. That compares to 39 per cent last month. A CNN-USA Today poll, however, showed only 24 per cent favoured impeachment if a cover-up was proven.

Sydney alert after parasites at private plant taint city's water

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

SYDNEY was put on health alert yesterday after the city's private water company admitted supplies were contaminated by parasites. A million households were urged to boil their tap water to make it safe to drink. Schools sealed off drinking fountains and offered bottled water, dentists cancelled surgery, and restaurants withdrew salads and oysters from their menus as the scare spread.

The crisis is a major blow to the standing of Australia's largest city. The embarrassment for politicians was compounded because a high level political delegation, including the United States secretary of state, Madeline Albright, and the US defence secretary, William Cohen, was visiting for talks.

The New South Wales state government recently gave

Australian Water Services, a private company, a stake in the formerly fully public utility called Sydney Water.

The source of the city-wide contamination by *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*, which can cause chronic diarrhoea, weakness, cramps and nausea, is the Prospect water filtration plant. The site, one of the largest and most modern in the

world, is operated by Australian Water Services. Sydney Water believes the cause of the contamination is either a dead animal, a failure of the filtration equipment, or both.

Jeff Angel, of the Total Environment Centre, said Sydney Water's drive to make money had effected its core duties to protect health and the environment. "The gov-

ernment should investigate if the corporate culture of Sydney Water has become too focused on the business of producing dividends and cutting corners to make 'efficiencies'," he said.

The New South Wales government has ordered an inquiry and the state premier, Bob Carr, warned that any Sydney Water bureaucrats in work and public places.

Bars were making ice from polluted water and water mains were flushed out in a bid to wash away the microscopic organisms.

Peter Macdonald, an independent state MP, said: "This is 'the' street, cooking, eating, which takes about its product as 'Good enough to bottle and too precious to waste'. They have been great at their promotional services but when it comes to the real test, they have stumbled."

The state's health department said the decision to warn people about brushing their teeth, washing food and even giving tap water to their pets was made because, even if the risk was low, so many people were exposed. Aids organisations have issued their own alerts, because people with depressed immune systems, which includes transplant and chemotherapy patients, can be at increased risk.

The embarrassment was compounded as a high-level US delegation was in town

found to have failed in their public duty would be dismissed. "The taxpayers, the ratepayers of NSW, are entitled when they turn on their taps to clean, safe water," he said. "It's the obligation of Sydney Water to give it to them."

Shops sold out of bottled water and "Do not drink" warnings were pasted on taps

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Lucky 13 win biggest ever jackpot

Mark Tran in Washington

THIRTEEN machine shop workers in the United States town of Westerville, Ohio, struck it fabulously rich yesterday by winning the biggest lottery jackpot in history.

The winning ticket was bought at the Speedway petrol station on a convenience store in Richmond, Indiana, 100 miles from Westerville, since Ohio does not sell Powerball lottery tickets. It was last night being taken by a minibus car to Indiana for

verification before the winners are officially declared. The lucky 13 chose the \$181.5 million (\$85.5 million) lump-sum rather than the larger jackpot of \$295.7 million spread over 25 years. The previous record jackpot for a single ticket was \$195 million, also in the Powerball game, won by an Illinois couple in May who took the \$104-million lump-sum.

Debbie Person, the Speedway's manager, said it was not until a police officer came by that she realised her store had sold the winning ticket. The police

asked if it was indeed the winning ticket, and she said it was. The store was a tourist attraction. The winner, a 60-year-old man, was a contest that whittled the US into a frenzy as the jackpot was swelled by repeated draws in which no one won the top prize.

Lottery fever was at its height in the state, and Washington DC, where Powerball tickets are sold, and in neighbouring states. Hopefuls sometimes drove for hours for a chance to transform their lives with a \$1 (60p) ticket.

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Clashes as Brazil phone service sells for £11.5bn

Alex Bellon in Rio de Janeiro

BRAZIL'S sale of the century — the privatisation of its mammoth telecommunications service — was yesterday hailed as a world-beating success, despite rioting outside the Rio de Janeiro stock exchange that left 44 people injured.

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso claimed that the sale of Telebras for \$11.5 billion — 60 per cent more than the asking price — was unprecedented in the history of capitalism and would start a "communications revolution" that would benefit the Brazilian people.

Years of under-investment mean only about one in 10 people in Brazil has a telephone, compared to about six in 10 in the United States and France. Lines are considered so much of a luxury that they have become a measure of wealth and often figure as assets, like vehicles and property.

In São Paulo — the southern hemisphere's largest industrial centre — the problem is so acute that telephone lines cost up to \$5,000 on the black market. The infrastructure is so poor that 17 million people are waiting for phones



Shore line: Only one in 10 Brazilians has a telephone, but that should change now that the state-owned monopoly has been auctioned off

and up to 30 per cent of calls in the main cities fail to get through.

The sell-off, one of the world's biggest of government assets, was the high point of Brazil's privatisation programme and follows the sell-off and deregulation of the huge mining, transport and power sectors. The winning bidders for the 12 holdings came from leading European and North American telephone companies.

Some 4,500 military police closed off the centre of Rio during the auction on Wednesday after pitched battles with thousands of protesters, including students, trade union members and people from the radical landless movement, who believe that Telebras should remain in exclusively Brazilian hands.

Police fired bullets and tear gas, leaving many demonstrators injured.

The argument behind a government-run telecommunications network was that the state would be an independent distributor of the service, providing everyone, not just the rich and privileged, with access to a telephone. But under-investment and bureaucracy led to a black market which encouraged many poorer people who got telephones to rent them to the rich.

This reinforced the differences between Brazil's rich and poor. Figures show that the wealthiest 16 per cent of the population of 150 million own 61 per cent of the telephone lines. The poorest 57 per cent have 2 per cent of the phones.

The winning bidders of the Telebras holdings will be committed by law to double to 33 million the number of installed telephone lines by the end of 2000.

The cash from the sell-off will go to reduce the 6.7 per cent budget deficit, buying Mr Cardoso time to introduce more belt-tightening reforms to keep the currency stable.

Mr Cardoso, a former left-winger whose political repu-

tation is based on tough fiscal policies, hopes to be re-elected in two months for a second four-year term. The Telebras privatisation was "a centerpiece of his first term, and its success will be a blow to the leftwing opposition candidate, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is running a distant second in the opinion polls."

Investors were jubilant at the results of the sale. "This is fantastic. The government can write off about 7 per cent of the national debt in just one day," said a telecommunications analyst, William Laurent, of Robert Fleming & Co.

One research group estimates that a reliable telephone system could directly create up to 49,000 jobs, and another 50,000 jobs in related industries.

"It will have the same effect as what happened in the 1980s when the car industries arrived in the country," said Gilberto Geraldo Garcia, president of the computer firm NEC in Brazil.

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مكتبة المجلد

Analysis Genetic engineering

Trashing the crops

by John Vidal

Patrick Whitefield is a lecturer with no history of civil disobedience. After hearing that five women had earlier this month gone into a test field and pulled up some genetically modified plants being tested for the US chemical firm Monsanto, he phoned a Manchester-based group called Genetix Snowball and offered to do the same. Should Whitefield do so, he risks being sued, fined and given a criminal record. Within weeks of his offer, a Manchester community worker, a Welsh lawyer and at least 250 others including the television chef Antony Worrall-Thomson had phoned to support or to join others taking "non-violent direct action" against the controversial crops.

Hardly eco-warriors in the road-protest style, their concern ranged across health, environment, consumer choice and the concentration of the food chain into very few hands.

The peace movement used similar "accountable" tactics in the 1980s when more than 2,000 women were fined for publicly snipping the wire at Greenham Common in protest at the introduction of cruise missiles.

More recently, activists left their calling cards when they smashed the nose of a warplane bound for Indonesia. The organisers of Genetix Snowball, trying to be "responsible" and "principled" by telling the farmers and the police their plans in advance, hope to gather hundreds of people prepared to offer themselves to the courts.

They face competition in the fields. Widespread grassroots action against GM crops is intensifying. All 325 test fields in Britain have been identified from (often inaccurate) official lists and at least 25 have been destroyed by ad hoc and uncoordinated groups. Some firms have not reported attacks for fear that it will increase the chances of copycat crimes.

Monsanto is seeking to win damages in the High Court against the five women who destroyed the crops.

Some give themselves names, like the "Lincolnshire

Pros and cons

For

- Genetic engineering can make food safer and more nutritious.
- It can help to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- It can help to reduce the use of water and fertilisers.
- It can help to reduce the use of land.

Against

- Genetic engineering can create new allergens and toxins.
- It can lead to the loss of biodiversity.
- It can lead to the loss of traditional varieties.
- It can lead to the loss of control over the food system.

Loppers, "Captain Chromosome" and the "Genetic Superheroes". The "Kenilworth Croppers" recently scythed down a heavily guarded display of GM wheat at the Royal Agricultural Show. Several fields growing non-GM crops have been attacked by mistake.

But the coming together of peace and environmental activists is just the tip of the opposition against companies promoting GM food technologies. A stunning array of middle England is now roughly united in disapproval or fear of the implications and is not impressed by corporate claims that GM is totally safe, healthy and will benefit the developing world.

The Women's Institute, the Townswomen's Guild, the Consumers Association and the Country Landowners, all with particular concerns, want a moratorium of between two and five years on commercial growing of the crops. So do the 1 million-member RSPB, the Government's own wildlife advisers English Nature, and more than 200 wholefood companies.

Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Green Party and the Soil Association want to halt the introduction of the crops altogether. Meanwhile, overseas development groups like Oxfam and Christian Aid express deep reservations about corporate claims that the technology will cure world

hunger. The National Trust, Britain's biggest landowner which is increasingly involved in organic farming, is studying the issues. The National Farmer's Union is uneasy. The gardening press is worried.

Meanwhile a House of Lords select committee on agriculture is conducting a wide inquiry into GM crops to report later this year. Opposition MPs claimed last night in a Commons adjournment debate that the Government's approach to trials was illegal, that the test crops were poorly regulated and monitored, and that organic farmers received no protection.

Add the supermarket chains which are watching the situation closely and the general public, which in poll after poll expresses unease, and no one can remember such a broad consensus of concern about any one issue, let alone agriculture. There is anger that no one was consulted, parliament barely debated the issues and it was imposed by international or European law.

The concern is now spilling over into town halls and schools as local lobbyists call for the safeguarding of food meals. A "citizen's jury" (9) which spent weeks recently listening to evidence from all sides rejected the technology.

THE Government has set up a working group drawing on four departments — the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry — to head off what may become a crisis. Damage to trial crops is said to be putting back the programme of commercial growing and costing the companies thousands of pounds. Although the DTI and MoH are enthusiastic backers of the technology, DeTR and the Ministry of Health are less gung-ho.

Last week, Julie Hill, the only non-scientist member of the committee of experts that advises the government on genetic releases into the environment, called for much broader concerns to be taken into account before approval is given. So far they have not refused one application out of more than 400.

Britain is not alone. The leaders of France's second biggest farm union have



Green but how pleasant?

Some of the 320 British sites where Monsanto are testing genetically-modified crops

- 1 Millrig Farm, Kirkstall, Letham
- 2 Edge House Farm, Belsay, Newcastle upon Tyne
- 3 Manor Farm, Eddlethorpe, Malton, N Yorks
- 4 Pottington Grange, Pottington, Gooles, Humberside
- 5 Barr Farm, Edlington, Horncastle, Lincs
- 6 Top Brackendale, Cropwell Butler, Bingham, Nottinghamshire
- 7 Wilson Hall Farm, Slade Lane, Wilson, Mablethorpe, Dorsetshire
- 8 Tib Hall Farm, Kingsbury, nr. Tamworth, Staffordshire
- 9 Byton House Farm, Telford, Shropshire
- 10 Rostock Grange Farm, Rostock Road, Leicestershire
- 11 Wood Farm, Morley Research, Wymondham, Norfolk
- 12 Roselle Farm Buildings, Cowlinge, Newmarket, Suffolk
- 13 Warwick Farm, Ramsey, Cambs
- 14 Firtree Farm, Fillingley, nr. Coventry, Warwickshire
- 15 East Lodge Farm, Stanton, nr. Broadway, Worcester
- 16 The Most, Antony's Cross, Newent, Glos.
- 17 Model Farm, Shilburn, Watlington, Oxford
- 18 Throes Farm, Stebbing, Great Dunmow, Essex
- 19 Wye Agricultural College, Bank Lane, Ailington, nr. Ashford, Kent
- 20 Haycombe Hill Farm, Sutton Verry, Warrminster, Wilt

Other firms and organisations testing GM crops on a total of 325 British sites include:

- AgrEvo UK Crop Protection
- Centre for Plant Biotechnology & Biotechnology, University of Leeds
- National Institute of Agricultural Botany
- Novartis Seeds Ltd
- Pioneer Genetics
- Plant Genetic Systems
- Scottish Crop Research Institute
- Sharpes International Seeds

become folk heroes after being given suspended prison sentences for destroying GM grain. There have been seven arrests in Ireland and a high profile court case.

Greenpeace claims to have mobilised 350,000 consumers in Germany and there is widespread disapproval in Holland and Denmark. Switzerland recently had a referendum on the future of biotechnology. It was approved but only after massive lobbying by the Swiss-based drug and chemical companies who threatened to leave.

Last week European activists flew to the Missouri home town base of Monsanto, the industry leaders, to join the first meeting of global

activists against the crops. In India, there are expected to be riots if and when the new technology is introduced. Several years ago more than 750,000 small farmers rallied against the World Trade Organisation and American companies patenting seeds.

The massive Grameen Bank based in Pakistan which pioneered the philosophy of credit for the poor pulled out of a joint venture with Monsanto this week.

Monsanto, moreover, has upset its own industry by going "too far, too fast". With more than 100 million acres of GM crops now under cultivation on four continents after just four years' planting, the company

admits it underestimated the European culture (7). It has now opened an office in London, engaged Tim Bell for its PR, and is running a £1 million press advertising campaign. But the Advertising Standards Authority has already received more than 50 complaints ranging from the Green party to the Countryside Restoration Trust.

Monsanto corporate communication chiefs have meanwhile visited newspaper editors, journalists, and critics. The company has set up web-pages, and runs a telephone information line.

The seed and chemical companies, research institutes and universities growing the

patented crops feel increasingly threatened, and regret that their message of scientific responsibility is not being heard. They insist that people's fears are groundless. They make no distinctions between those who act openly and those who act secretly, calling the crop-wrecking vandalism and destruction of the very evidence they say is needed to monitor safety. The groups reply that they are deliberately not touching the crops that are testing ecological data. The clamour for a moratorium is growing.

Sources: (1) Genetix Snowball, One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, 0161 634 0295; (2)

English Nature, GM position statement July 9, 1998; (3) House of Lords Select Committee on Agriculture; (4) Hansard July 30 1998; (5) Citizen's jury, University of East London Department of Environmental Science June 1998; (6) Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, article by Julie Hill, Guardian July 15, 1998; (7) Monsanto annual report, website, www.monsanto.co.uk Tel: 0171 485 8455. Graphics sources: Friends of the Earth; University of Dundee Science Photo Library. Graphics: Paddy Allen; Suzanne Hallan. Research: Jane Crinnion. John Vidal is the Guardian Environment editor.

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Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

FOR the second time this week, I am compelled to upbraid Mr Tony Blair for lack of common courtesy. Following the news that he has turned his Italian holiday host out of his own Renaissance villa, he abruptly leaves the House of Commons just as Frank Field prepared to make his resignation speech. The official Downing Street line is that Mr Tony had to rush off to a private meeting with William Hague — an explanation damaged, some might think, by William's presence in the chamber throughout Frank's speech. Mr Blair's malign influence trickles down to his press office. "You're from the Diary?" says someone at Number 10 when we call for clarification. "Then ask your lobby correspondent. Bye." Then he hangs up. More insolence. In the light of this endemic cheek, we are obliged to launch a drive to educate New Labour about the need for politeness. The campaign will be called "Traditional Manners in a Modern Setting". There is much work to be done, and we cannot start too soon.

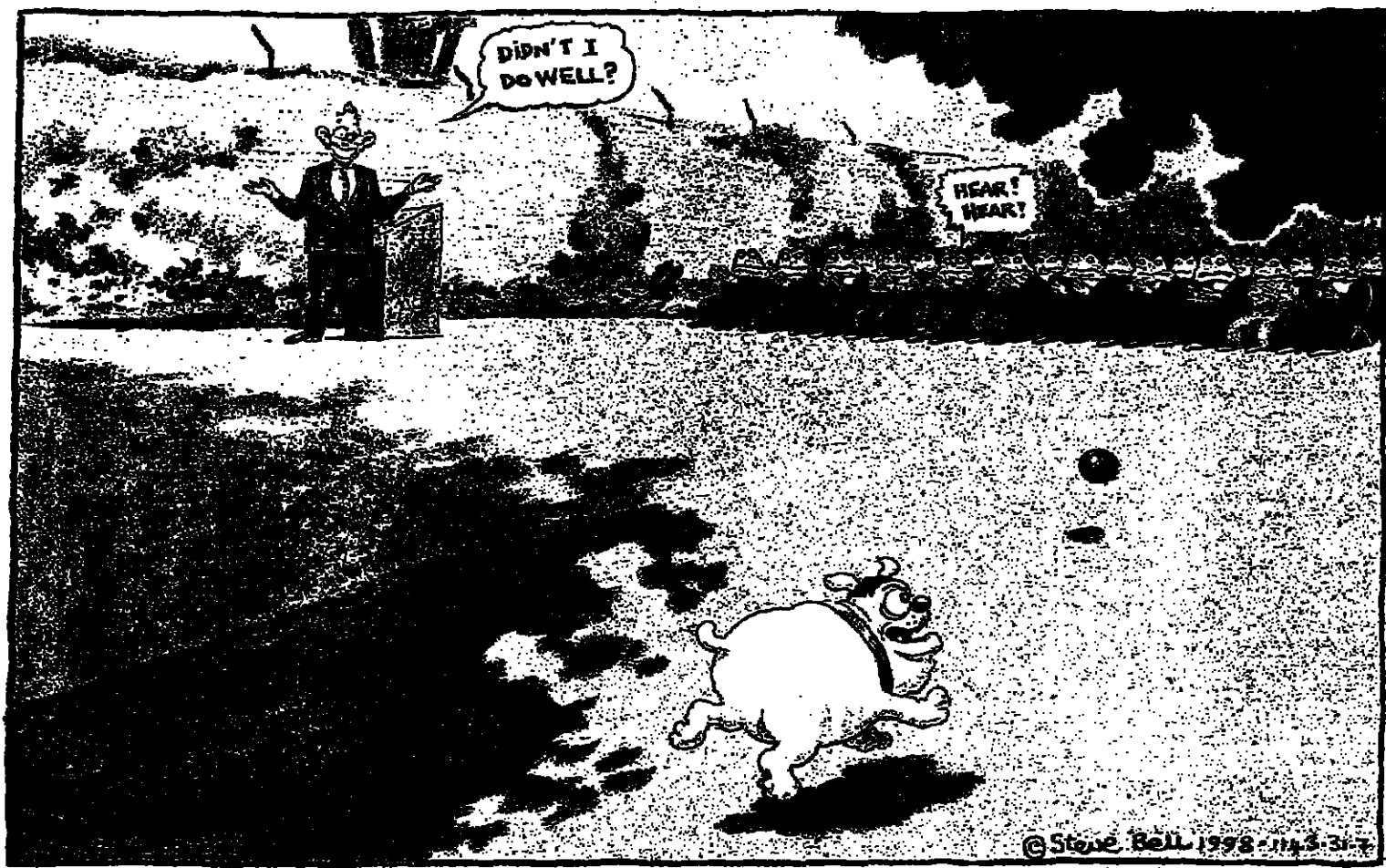
THE Tories have little to be smug about, as a call to Alan Duncan, William Hague's right hand man fondly remembered for speculations in the council house market and his plan to legalise heroin, confirms. "What part of the paper are you from?" the little man asks my colleague Simon Bowers. "Ah, I don't normally talk to diaries." But we just wanted to put to you the rumour that you are planning to spend the summer holidays at an exclusive male charm school in the Swiss Alps for an intensive course in etiquette, dress sense and Latin ballroom dancing. "If you want to be a grown up journalist," says Alan, "I wouldn't ask questions like that."

MEANWHILE, the heartwarming decision by Tory vice-chairman Archie Norman to sack Tory staff aged over 50 bears fruit. "Mature Lady," begins an advert in Westminster's House magazine. "Redundancy casualty at Conservative Party HQ seeks employment. Former councillor, DHSS officer and currently sole bookshop manager." As the column that prides itself on a mature readership, we wish her well and invite would-be employers to call her on 0171 898 4004.

THERE is more news of the charming Paul Twino, the fiercely independent-minded researcher on the recent Everyman show about Louis Farrakhan, who doubled up as director of the campaign to overturn the ban on the Nation of Islam leader entering the country. Robert Singh, a lecturer at Edinburgh University, author of the Farrakhan Phenomenon, reports that last October Mr Twino rang and asked him to be a consultant on the Everyman film. He agreed, sent Mr Twino the book and gave him some contact numbers in America. Mr Twino rang one man, delivering the inevitable anti-semitic rant on discovering he was Jewish, and then rang Mr Singh to explain that the book would not be featured in the programme since it was "distorted". What a delightful soul this Twino sounds.

IN the Spectator, Petronella Wyatt interviews Gordon Brown, whom she compares repeatedly to Tiberius. The late Emperor's hobbies were pornography and tearing the wings off flies, but it is Tiberius's patience in waiting for his chance to govern and his fiscal nous that form the basis of the comparison. Meanwhile, Gordon paints himself as a happy-go-lucky guy, who just kinda blundered into the Treasury. "I'm no different from the man on the street," he tells her. "I just happen to be Chancellor. A lot of it is luck."

A LATE bid for July's PC Brains award comes from Belgium, where seven police motorcyclists arrived late for a major all-day parade in Brussels. All were behaving eccentrically, and when one fell off as he tried to mount his bike, other officers were summoned to breathealyse them. All seven were over the limit.



The shocking thing is, the truth about Derek Bentley was there all the time

Tamsin Allen



THERE will be many who yesterday felt a profound sense of relief that the criminal justice system has finally acknowledged that Derek Bentley should never have been convicted, let alone hanged, and the family has surely earned their celebrations. However, there is more to cause disquiet than rejoicing in the history of this most cruel miscarriage of justice.

This is not a case where startling new evidence forces a re-evaluation, or indeed, where changed attitudes demand a changed verdict. All the grounds of the appeal, which caused the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Justice Kennedy, and Mr Justice Collins to conclude that the conviction should not stand come from the original papers. They were there for the Court of Appeal in 1953 and before Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe (the then Home Secretary) when he refused to reprieve Bentley; they formed the nucleus of Iris Bentley's campaign; they were rejected by Kenneth Clarke in 1992 when he refused to grant a pardon and they were the basis of the submissions made again to the Home Office in 1996 in anticipation of Iris's impending death. Yesterday's decision could have been made at any time during the past 45 years, and it is one of the most shocking aspects of the case that it was not — that instead it was blocked and obstructed until after the death of Derek himself, his parents William and Lilian and of his loyal sister, Iris. The history of this case is not

just the story of the courage and tenacity of one woman's fight against the state on behalf of her "judicially murdered" brother. It is also the story of stupefying callousness and cynicism on the part of the police, the judiciary, and the Home Office — all institutions which are expected to protect the innocent. The evidence presented by the police at the trial was so riddled with inconsistencies and improbabilities that it is seriously and fatally flawed. However, the quality of the police evidence was never properly examined at trial, perhaps because Derek's own barrister is reported to have started the case with the private observation that "both little fuckers ought to swing". The jury never heard the medical evidence that was available to both the crown and the defence which showed that Derek had an IQ of at best 77 and possibly lower, that his mental age was between nine and 11, and that he was borderline mentally defective being classifiable as "feeble-minded" under the Mental Deficiency Act then in force. Lord Goddard conducted the trial with uncommon prejudice and even failed to safeguard Derek's innocence with the very minimum required by a direction to the jury on the standard of proof.

His parents' heart-rending appeals first for clemency and then simply to be allowed to lay flowers on their son's grave inside the prison were rejected with a numbingly formal response that was

repeated word for word, year after year. But bureaucratic indifference was not confined to the unenlightened 1950s. When Iris's tireless campaigning resulted in the Home Secretary considering the grant of a pardon in 1991, a police report was commissioned, but "for presentational reasons only" according to a leaked internal memo at the time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the spirit in which the report was requested, its conclusions were ignored, and Kenneth Clarke refused the application in 1992, saying that there were no "good grounds" for a pardon.

THE original case papers were subjected to a 75-year secrecy order which was only lifted when the Home Secretary was threatened with legal proceedings. Even the Legal Aid Board failed Iris by refusing legal aid for the judicial review of Clarke's decision and for the application to the Criminal Cases Review Commission, until threatened themselves with judicial review.

The CCRC has been notable as an exception to the Bentley family's dreary experience of, at best, indifference and, at worst, contempt. But although the case was finally referred to the Court of Appeal, one result of the years of stagnation is that the court was not able to test the questionable police evidence of the events of the night of November 2, 1952. Christopher Craig says that Bentley came over to him

on the roof and tried to stop him from shooting John Parry, Craig's counsel at trial confirmed that he was told the same thing at trial 45 years ago but advised his client against giving evidence then. Bentley himself, although he denied it at trial, had previously told a prison doctor that he had tried to stop Craig, and an eyewitness to the events heard someone call to Craig to stop. Despite the assumption which has entered folk lore, the words Bentley used were almost certainly not "let him have it". Although it is very likely that the officers in charge of the investigation would have known them well — they were the same words which condemned a professional burglar's accomplice 12 years before in the leading case on joint enterprise and murder of a policeman. But it is now far too late to know whether this is more than just an unlikely coincidence.

Yesterday's decision is welcome indeed. But if even Iris, respectable, middle-aged and loved by the media and the general public, could not achieve recognition of Derek's innocence in her lifetime despite her relentless campaign, then what hope is there for others without the benefit of such doughy support? The CCRC will have its work cut out if it is to help the hidden victims of miscarriages of justice to get their cases back before the court.

Tamsin Allen is the solicitor for the Bentley family. Decca Aitkenhead is away

Slosh sex in the South

Ben Buford



THE rival magazine editors bidding for the rights to publish Tom Wolfe's new novel had to read the manuscript under strict conditions. It was a monstrous thing, 14 inches high (and still not completed — there was, at the time, a further six inches to come). One of the conditions was that we had to attack it in the offices of its publisher, on a sweltering day in a room without windows or air conditioning, behind closed glass doors in full view of the staff who walked back and forth all day long, waving to see how it was going. My chief objective, I admit, was neither literary nor commercial: it was not to be caught napping.

The other condition was that we were not to talk about it: anyone who blabbed would have to bear the legal consequences. What are the legal consequences of blabbing in a country which has a constitution guaranteeing the right to free blabbing? Hmm...

WELL, there was probably never an auction in the first place. My suspicion is that Rolling Stone, which got the serial rights and printed its first instalment earlier this month, was going to publish Wolfe all along (Wolfe and Rolling Stone editor Jan Wenner have a famous, long-standing relationship). It was a question of curiosity: was someone out there insane enough to pay many more times than what Jan Wenner was prepared to pull out of his already luxuriously lined pockets? (A million dollars, it was said, would do just fine.) In the event, Vanity Fair offered the most (\$200,000 was the figure I heard), but it wasn't that much more than what Rolling Stone offered. (The New Yorker, where I work, made a handsome offer, but its most alluring feature was an aeroplane flying over the Hamptons, towing a banner, saying: "Read Tom Wolfe in the Summer Fiction Issue." Ah, well.)

What can I say about the book? Well, according to my agreement, nothing. But I wonder. Now that extracts are appearing, isn't the word out?

It's set in the South, and aspires to do for Atlanta what Bonfire Of The Vanities did for New York. Its characters include Roger-too-White, a 32-year-old lawyer, an Oreo like

the American "cookie", black on the outside, white underneath; the mayor of Atlanta (who is only semi-black — that is, "a brown paper bagger"); Georgia Tech football coach Brook McNutter; a banker named Peepgass, who can't keep his thingamajig in his trousers; and Croker, a testosterone-driven over-extended real-estate impresario.

There are three plots. One involves Croker: the banks want their money back. One involves the daughter of one of Croker's friends: at a fraternity party, she has what is called "slosh sex" (sex when falling down, pissed drunk) with a black football player, whom, in a moment of particularly expedience, she accuses of rape. The other involves Conrad, one of the people made redundant at Croker's meat-making plants, for whom everything that could go wrong goes wrong. This is — or, I should say, this is going to be — a big-throated, jaunty, wonderfully exaggerated comic novel, with a huge sweep, and its subject is nothing less than the whole of America.

I hadn't realised Wolfe's clout. When word went around that I had read the book, I had loads of messages from people wanting to know about it. They included a guy in a mail room, ad sales reps, a young marketing executive and two people who had moved to New York because of Bonfire Of The Vanities. Can you imagine moving to a city because of a novel?

But what about Wolfe's critical reputation? He is, curiously, not big in literary circles. Bonfire won no prizes. It wasn't short-listed for the National Book Award or the Pulitzer. You hear talk of Don DeLillo or Thomas Pynchon. You hear how well Philip Roth is writing. But Wolfe? Last night, I looked at Bonfire again. There is a new edit-

Tom Wolfe asserts the power of good old-fashioned story-telling

tion which includes an essay by Wolfe on American fiction. He attacks formal experiment. He dismisses two generations of American novelists — most of them subsidised by university teaching positions — in favour of a Dickensian defence of entertainment. He advocates research, reporting, facts, in place of staying at home and making the whole thing up. In effect, he asserts the power of good old-fashioned story-telling, written with verve and great sentences. And I think he's a master. To my mind, he doesn't deserve an American prize. He wants that one they give away in Stockholm.

If unemployment rises sharply, welfare-to-work will be at risk, and all the Chancellor's plans for public spending thrown into disarray

Gordon's little lamb

John Gray

WHEN Americans say something is history they mean that it is of no consequence. When the same thing is said by Europeans, it means that they are faced with an all-too-familiar problem which has no apparent solution. The same words express irreconcilable views of history. Over the past 30 years, successive British governments have echoed the American view only to find the European one forced on them by events. Will the Blair Government be any different?

Last May's landslide occurred as a result of an unrepeatably conjunction of events. A government more comprehensively discredited than any in living memory combined with a booming economy to give Labour a unique opportunity. By refashioning itself as a party of which affluent Conservative voters need not be afraid, Labour was able to exploit that opportunity to the full. Fifteen months on, the

Tories show no sign of recovering. From being the political ruling class they have become an English minority party that only intermittently acts as an opposition. Blair's Government has little to fear from the Tories.

But the booming economy that it inherited from them is turning out to have been unsustainable. As a result, the Government is threatened by a return of the boom-bust cycle which it believed had been finally consigned to the past.

Labour's confidence that a decisive break had been made with Britain's post-war economic history depends on accepting the economic orthodoxy established during the Thatcher era as a final truth. In fact, the belief that orthodox fiscal and monetary policies can ensure economic stability is one of the Government's most problematical inheritances. The same belief underpins the Clinton administration's confidence that it has established a "new paradigm" of steady

growth in which economic cycles have been left behind. Inflation has been banished forever and stock markets only go up.

If history is our guide, economic nirvana of the kind envisaged in the "new paradigm" is not a real possibility. History shows that capitalism advances

When capitalism is truly global, no economy can be insulated from turmoil elsewhere in the world

through cycles of invention in which entire industries and occupations are wiped out and whole classes of people ruined. This gale of creative destruction is not a process that produces stability — social or economic. And when capitalism is truly global, as it is today, no economy can be insulated from turmoil elsewhere in

the world. Gordon Brown has concluded that recession is not on the cards. Whether his judgment is correct will turn largely on developments in faraway countries over which no western government has much influence.

Unemployment in parts of east Asia is rising rapidly to depression levels. By the end of the year over 20,000,000 Indonesians are likely to be without jobs, and around half of the population of 200,000,000 is expected to live in poverty. Some observers expect unemployment in China to rise to around 20 per cent of the workforce over the next few years. Neither country has anything that resembles a Western-style welfare state.

Economic dislocation on this scale is not normally associated with political stability. Indeed, on the evidence of this century's history, it is reasonable to expect it to be accompanied by changes of regime in the countries that are worst affected. It is hard to conceive how Britain's economy could not be seriously affected by



an economic collapse and political upheaval in Asia.

The Government's welfare-to-work programme depends crucially on the economy making a soft landing. If unemployment rises sharply, that flagship policy will be at risk, and all Gordon Brown's plans for public spending will be thrown into disarray. A good deal is being wagered on the American faith that economic cycles are history.

Policies that rely on longstanding historical patterns ceasing to apply court failure. It is better to be prepared for history than to be constantly surprised by it. To rely on orthodoxy in domestic policy producing economic stability is a decidedly risky bet when capitalism has gone global. If the Blair Government stakes too much on that bet, it will join all the other post-war British governments that began by imagining they could alter history and ended by hoping they might somehow survive it.

John Gray is professor of European thought at the LSE

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A quiet revolution

Let Labour answer to us

FOR a government that's only been in office for 15 months, the Blair administration is surprisingly fond of assessing its own, brief history. On May 1, Labour marked its first anniversary with a considered look at the story so far, they did something similar in the closing days of 1997 and, last summer, Peter Mandelson and John Prescott delivered a formal presentation to celebrate Labour's first 100 days in power. Yesterday, Labour reached yet another one of these stock-taking landmarks, as the Prime Minister launched his government's first annual report. Like a smiling chief executive, Mr Blair briefed the shareholders of UK plc on the progress so far in realising the 177 commitments they made in their election-winning manifesto last year. His verdict was that he and his ministers could be "genuinely proud" of their record.

It would be easy to mock yesterday's performance. Not only was it yet another review by a government which has made self-assessment into an art form, it was also a self-consciously US-style event. Billed as a British version of America's State of the Union address, Mr Blair even delivered his remarks in Downing Street's equivalent of the White House Rose Garden. Significantly, his audience was not Parliament — where he would have faced questions — but a hand-picked assembly of allies. Moreover, as the Liberal Democrats pointed out yesterday, although Mr Blair presented his document in the style of a company report, it had

been subject to no outside, independent auditing. Still, it was a worthwhile exercise and one to be encouraged. The Government can be proud of its record, achieved through the near-constant surge of activity which produced yet another wave of papers and proposals this very week. Without conducting one more retrospective of our own, Mr Blair is right to boast of the Government's progress in Northern Ireland and its fulfilment of 60 of its 177 campaign promises. On the five key pledges, famously reproduced on those wallet-size cards, there has been steady progress — although, as Mr Blair admitted, success is still far from complete in the reduction of NHS waiting lists or welfare reform.

But beyond the details of the record itself, it is the very idea of setting objectives and assessing their fate that is to be applauded. We accept performance targets in industry, schools and even hospitals — so why not Whitehall? They are a useful way to expose weaknesses and to spot shortfalls. Perhaps the Government regrets setting the wrong goal in health — waiting lists rather than waiting times — but some of its other aims have been suitably bold. Halving the time between arrest and sentence for juvenile criminals is an admirable objective, as is the Social Exclusion Unit's demand of a two-thirds reduction in the numbers of people living on the streets by 2002.

More deeply, the very notion of holding government to clear, explicit promises is a good one. It strips away some of the mystery and confusion of politics, enabling people to view government much as they regard any other service. Voters can look at Labour and say, well, they promised x, y and z — did they deliver? By casting himself as a chief executive, Tony Blair cast the rest of us as shareholders: in other words, we are the

boss and he works for us. That's how it should be, with the PM and his team obliged to explain to us each year how they spent our hard-earned money. This is a new way of regarding power in Britain, where we are more used to seeing politicians as our masters than our servants. If Mr Blair wants to reverse that, then perhaps this will be the "great, radical, reforming government" he promises — leading a profound, if quiet revolution.

Kosovo's map

Self-rule must be credible

IT IS A familiar tale. European envoys report finding a "wasteland" in central Kosovo. Foreign monitors say they have "lost track" of more than 20,000 refugees who fled the town of Mallesvo. Serb officers deny ethnic cleansing, but the burning houses and the bewildered peasants on dusty roads evoke memories of Bosnia not long ago. The impression of hopeless drift is echoed at the diplomatic level. Yesterday the EU troika team met President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade to be told, with equal implausibility, that the offensive in Kosovo was over and that he might be more "flexible" on the terms of autonomy.

The truth is that for Serbia to show flexibility requires three things to happen — none of which is very likely so far. First, Serbia has to be weakened — which means that international pressure must be sustained over months rather than surge up and then subside as has happened in Kosovo. Second, Kosovar resistance has to be knitted together to form something like a common front — a more than usually difficult task. On Wednesday the US ambassador from neighbouring Macedonia

thought he had won tentative agreement to bring together the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army and some of the political elements in Pristina to form an all-party transitional government. But Ibrahim Rugova, the current president who would be excluded from the plan, also announced his own scheme on Wednesday — which did not necessarily include the KLA.

The KLA, brought to life by years of Serb repression, is a complicating factor which has quickly dominated the scene. Suggestions that the West has tacitly condoned the new Serb offensive, in order to clip the KLA's wings and make it more amenable, are hotly denied. At the least, the rapid emergence of armed resistance has left would-be mediators baffled. But a weaker KLA could be a greater obstacle to negotiations, playing a Hamas-like role. A smarter strategy might be to back the KLA and in doing so push for unity among the factions.

The third requirement is for a coherent road map ahead. If self-rule is a more prudent goal than independence, it has to be so comprehensive as to make little difference. Any peaceful solution, as German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel said yesterday, has to be underwritten by an international military presence. In this sense, Kosovo has already become another Bosnia, although we are still a long way off another Dayton agreement.

Backdated justice

Bentley case reveals new needs

THERE were several familiar and cheerless features in yesterday's belated quashing of Derek Bentley's murder conviction 46 years after he was hanged: dubious police evidence, questionable prosecution procedures,

and an ostrich-like Home Office refusing to move against obvious failings in the criminal justice system. But there was something even more damning for the Home Office yesterday. Unlike more celebrated reversals of wrongful convictions — the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Maguire Seven — it was not based on new evidence or changed attitudes. As Bentley's lawyer on the opposite page notes, all the grounds used yesterday by the three Appeal Court judges in quashing the convictions stem from the original papers. They were there for earlier appeal hearings and even more important, earlier home secretaries to use.

C3 division, the Home Office department which handled miscarriages of justice, no longer exists. It was abolished following the 1983 report from the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice that was set up to look at the faults in the system exposed by the wrongful convictions in so many mainland terrorist trials. An executive department in charge of law and order was no place to house a unit which was supposed to challenge judicial decisions. Equally defective was its secretive procedures and readiness to act as a court, rather than a reviewing body. But all those injustices have passed under the bridge. There is a new, independent body, which campaigners began calling for 30 years ago. Bentley was one of 17 cases referred back to the courts by the new body in its first year. But it is already clear the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which has only just started its second year, is critically short of staff. Its chairman has called for a further 25 case review managers — double current numbers. The total cost would be £1.3 million. This is minuscule in terms of a law and order system costing £1,000 million. It would be difficult to find a cheaper way of shoring up public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Letters to the Editor

Belt up about sexy gossip

WHY are you slavishly following the American media, obsessed by inside-the-Beltway gossip about a bit of nooky next to the Oval Office? Your column inches seem to equate it with the conduct of a previous incumbent, whose presidency was responsible for the deaths of thousands in central America and the machinations of intrigue or an earlier president, one of whose many mistresses had links to the Mafia. I suggest you take a look at prosecutor Ken Starr's puppetmasters. Dermot Carley, Chichester, W Sussex.

AFTER three years in jail, David James has had his conviction for murder quashed. In 1995 you reported that the trial judge described him as an "evil, selfish and criminally callous man". The Home Secretary should now instruct judges to pass sentences without comment. John Norman, St Albans, Herts.

SPARE me the generalisations of the experts' response to Frank Field's green paper (Society Letters, July 28). To quote Marx (Groucho not Karl): "A child of five should have been sent for." D N Rushton, Burnley, Lancs.

I MUST say that when I see Emma Feline quoted as saying that to make it as a DJ a girl has to have real bollocks (Ladies Night, July 29), it gets right on my tits. Mike Hennessy, Durrhausen, Germany.

LUCKY students (Students Lare paid to eat pesticides, July 31). I've been involuntarily eating toxic pesticides all my life and nobody has ever paid me. Brian Moss, Tamworth, Staffs.

Killing the 'psycho' image

IT IS disappointing that the Government is to extend doctors' powers to force people given a psychiatric diagnosis to have medication (Doctors given more power in care shake-up, July 30) without reference to racism in the psychiatric services. Black people are forced to have medication in hospital to a disproportionate extent, often because they are misunderstood and their behaviour interpreted as due to "illness". Giving professionals even more power would merely aggravate the oppression that black people suffer, without necessarily improving public safety or the care of people with mental health problems. Dr Suman Fernando, Senior lecturer in Mental Health, University of Kent.

AS A reluctant member of the "mentally ill" club and user of the system I would ask the public to be a little less media-led in its scapegoating of people like myself. It is 38 years since Hitchcock made Psycho, but the depth of the impression and its stigmatising portrayal of a psychotic person remains strong. Any family accompanying a loved one to hospital cannot help but notice the distress and horrendous side-effects of

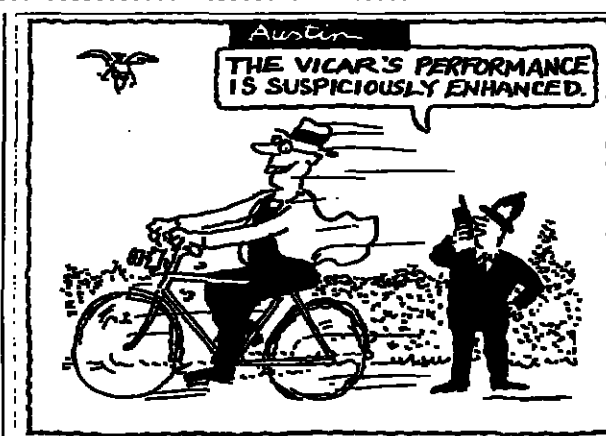
some of the drugs used (especially anti-psychotics). For the doctors' powers to force forcibly administering these "dirty" drugs is objectionable on human rights grounds and is led by the need to assuage the irrational fears of middle-class "focus groups". The mentally ill are a part of society and so have their fair share of murderers. But getting into your car is more likely to result in untimely death than taking a shower in the same house as a "psycho". James McFarlane, Hove, E Sussex.

THE day of the Cabinet reshuffle I arrived at Waterloo station to hear a chilling message. "This is a station announcement. Will the beggar please leave the station precinct, otherwise he is liable to police apprehension." So much for care in the community: social exclusion by tannoy. David Partridge, Emsworth, Hants.

YET again the Government shows itself to be determined to abolish the role and ignorant of scientific research. Its plans are based on the traditional model which states that "mental illnesses" have a physical basis and must be treated by physical means.

Only a few die-hard psychiatrists cling to this model. Most accept the results of extensive research which shows the effectiveness of psychological methods, particularly cognitive therapy in depression and psychosis, even with people whose delusions could lead them to be a danger to themselves and other people. The July issue of the British Journal of Psychiatry carries a report of a long-term follow-up of a controlled trial comparing cognitive therapy with standard drug treatment. This showed that those patients who received cognitive therapy continued to improve while those who received standard treatment did not. Cognitive therapy was also found to be more cost-effective. Dorothy Rowe, London.

COMPULSORY treatment of mental patients is acceptable in hospital, but not in the community (Leader, July 30), because patients are detained if they are a danger to themselves or others. If a patient is well enough to be in the community, compulsory treatment is no more justifiable than it would be for someone with diabetes. Malcolm Hurwitt, Southall, Middx.



PFI is the key to jail's problems

WE recognise that Parc prison has faced difficulties since it opened last November (Hostages and riots at newest private jail, July 29). We welcome the level of scrutiny, accountability and emphasis on performance that lies at the heart of PFI contracts such as at Parc.

All new prisons face problems in their first 18 months. An action plan, put in place in May, has strengthened the running of the prison. Richard Tili's letter to the Commons Public Accounts Committee states "there is evidence of distinct improvement in staff/prisoner relationships and control". Both Securicor and the Prison Service are confident that Parc has the necessary resources and staffing levels. As a governor with more than 30 years experience, I am wholly committed to implementing best practice. Bob Dixon, Director, HM Prison Parc, Bridgend, Mid-Gamorgan.

PARC Prison has had nothing but problems since it opened, because the Prison Service Agency failed to cast a sceptical eye over the economics Securicor proposed with its reliance on hi-tech at the

expense of people. Prison is labour intensive, because control can only be maintained through adequate supervision of the prisoners. Where there is inadequate supervision there is inadequate control. The agency must have known what was intended at Parc involved risk. The agency was content to see a potentially dangerous experiment conducted. If things went wrong it could deduct criticism by slapping a fine on the contractor, which it has done. There is nothing to stop the contractor recovering the fine from the future intended pay bill of the staff it put at risk in the first place.

But that is part of the free market and the contractors know that the Prison Service Agency would not interfere with such a fundamental market principle as exploitation. Peter Rusworth, National Union of Prison Service Union, Rugby.

BLACK prisoners were moved on because of the racist abuse they received at Parc. Should not the racist abuse be moved on? What is Securicor's anti-racism policy? Caroline Leinster, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Fuming pilot had a duty to smoke out toilet offender

REPORTS of the British pilot who delayed passengers on a Go flight in Milan while seeking the identity of an illicit smoker (Pilot fumes over smoking in loo row, July 28) contained more than one worrying element. The police action in detaining the captain instead of the offender, and their comment, "We took the view that the problem was not a serious offence", was the most worrying.

The smoker committed at least three serious offences and stupidly endangered the lives of 148 passengers by blocking the toilet smoke detector. Three jets have crashed or been gutted with heavy loss of life during that captain's flying career, due to toilet fires. Many aircraft have been saved by prompt crew action in response to the smoke alarm. The fires are nearly always caused by unextinguished smoking materials thrown in the toilet waste bin.

Capt Bliss's actions were motivated by his professional appreciation that smoking in the lavatory and interfering with smoke detectors is an extremely serious matter. Capt W Lucas, British Air Line Pilots Association, Hayes, Middx.

THE increase in drunkenness in the air (Soaring sky rage leads to call for drinks ban, July 27) and the incident involving the secret smoker are part of the same problem. People like myself are nervous flyers and in need of some toxic sustenance to make our journey more palatable. People are drinking more on flights simply because they aren't allowed to smoke on them any more. Patrick West, London.

WILL BA now rename its cut-throat offshoot Stay? Rashad Mohamed, Wembley, Middx.

Slow progress

AN analysis of your Analysis (July 29) of the 27 women now in the Government after the reshuffle yields the following: 13 (48 per cent) kept their jobs, eight (30 per cent) stayed at the same level, two (8 per cent) were promoted and four (15 per cent) came in at the lowest level. Two women were sacked, leaving a net gain of two. The proportion of women is about the same as that on the

Labour benches (26 per cent), which is, of course, less than half the proportion of women in the population. The proportion of women at Cabinet and ministerial level is less, and there are more women in the junior ministerial ranks. There's a long road ahead before government reflects society generally. Delys Carter, Tring, Herts.

Please include a full postal address even on e-mailed letters. We may edit letters.

Foul play

ANDY Burnham was right (No way to treat a football fan, July 30) to say that you can only learn so much about being a disabled fan by listening to the experiences of others. But does it follow that we learn more by listening to someone who is taking it easy? Why did the Football Task Force ask some of us real disabled people to do this work? Jenny Mitchell, Derby.

My reshuffle



ME? Like so many of our most distinguished columnists, I am disarmingly modest. As my major work of intensely personal autobiography, *Hug Me While I Weep For I Weep For The World*, published this autumn, reveals (and how), the real Bel Littlejohn is far more interested in national and international affairs than

in her own character, interesting though it undoubtedly is. But from time to time, the world throws up a good reason for giving herself a modest pat on the back.

A prediction is fulfilled, a philosophical argument won, a political dream ignited by the tinderbox of one's informed comment. And looking at Tony's reshuffle, I have plenty of cause for congratulation. Ever since June 1997, it has been an integral part of my role as a serious columnist to keep readers informed of the impending reshuffle. As early as June 17, barely six weeks after the election, I was predicting major changes.

In that piece — *Strang for Home Secretary* — I was one of the first to suggest a rift between Straw and Blair. And just three weeks later, on July 9, in a hard-hitting piece for G2, (Straw Secure At Home Office Despite Whispering

Campaign) I stuck my neck out and condemned the way spin-doctors from rival camps had used the press to manufacture a Blair/Straw rift.

In October '97, I was the first senior columnist to predict (Strang for Treasury) that Gavin Strang was insecure in his current role, and also the first to suggest (Strang Has Eye on Harman's Job) that he was ready for a move. And it is worth remembering that at that time even his closest colleagues had no idea who Strang was.

Of course, all eyes have been on Peter Mandelson since way before the general election. As early as March, 1997, (Mandelson For No 11) I was predicting a senior appointment at the heart of government. Since then, with uncanny prescience, I have tipped him for various top jobs — Transport Secretary, Health Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Chief Whip — all of which I am reliably in-

formed he was, at one time or another, considered for. A very personal word about a very dear friend here. Loyalty is not a word much associated with political columnists, but — I'm sorry! — I value it highly.

I'm sorry, but I've been gone in this current role, and since the early 1970s when, as Harriet Harman, she led The New Seekers to the number 2 slot with someone who is taking it easy. Why did the Football Task Force ask some of us real disabled people to do this work? Jenny Mitchell, Derby.

Over the last year, I've stood by Harriet through thick and thin, however incompetent or downright stupid she's been. Only last December, I was predicting great things for her in the imminent reshuffle (Harman for Top Environment job). And right up to last week (Harman's Gift for Long Division Tips Her for Top Treasury Job) I was still standing by her. In fact, my diary tells me

I was due to be lunching with her today at the Oxo Tower, though my lovely, lovely secretary Lynette has obviously been forced to cancel in the light of recent events.

Of course, one of the big stories of the year has been the removal of David Clark from (sub to fill in post occupied). This caught many of my colleagues on the hop, but when I was asked to write a short profile explaining exactly who he was, I was happy to oblige.

My piece was headed: David Clark — The Dismissal of an Unknown Quantity and pinpointed the most telling traits in his character. "David Clark," I began, "has been known to his friends and family as David, or Dave, ever since he was born. That's the sort of guy he is. But to those who know him less well — civil servants, constituents, complete

strangers — he has always been 'Mr Clark'. This dichotomy reveals the two sides of David Clark, forever switching between the private and the public faces depending on who he is with. Close friends say he is a stocky man of average or above-average height, and that he doesn't know him really know what makes Clark tick? The answer to that riddle must surely be no."

Bold, informed words, penned by a heavyweight columnist. Amidst the welter of gossip on topics of complete triviality that seems to constitute the diet of so many newspaper readers these days, it's good to know that there's one serious columnist who's prepared to deliver informed comment on subjects close to the heart of government. And what you may ask, of the next reshuffle? Bel's hot tip? It's got to be Mandelson for Number 11. And remember — you read it here first.

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Jerome Robbins

Dancing ballet on Broadway

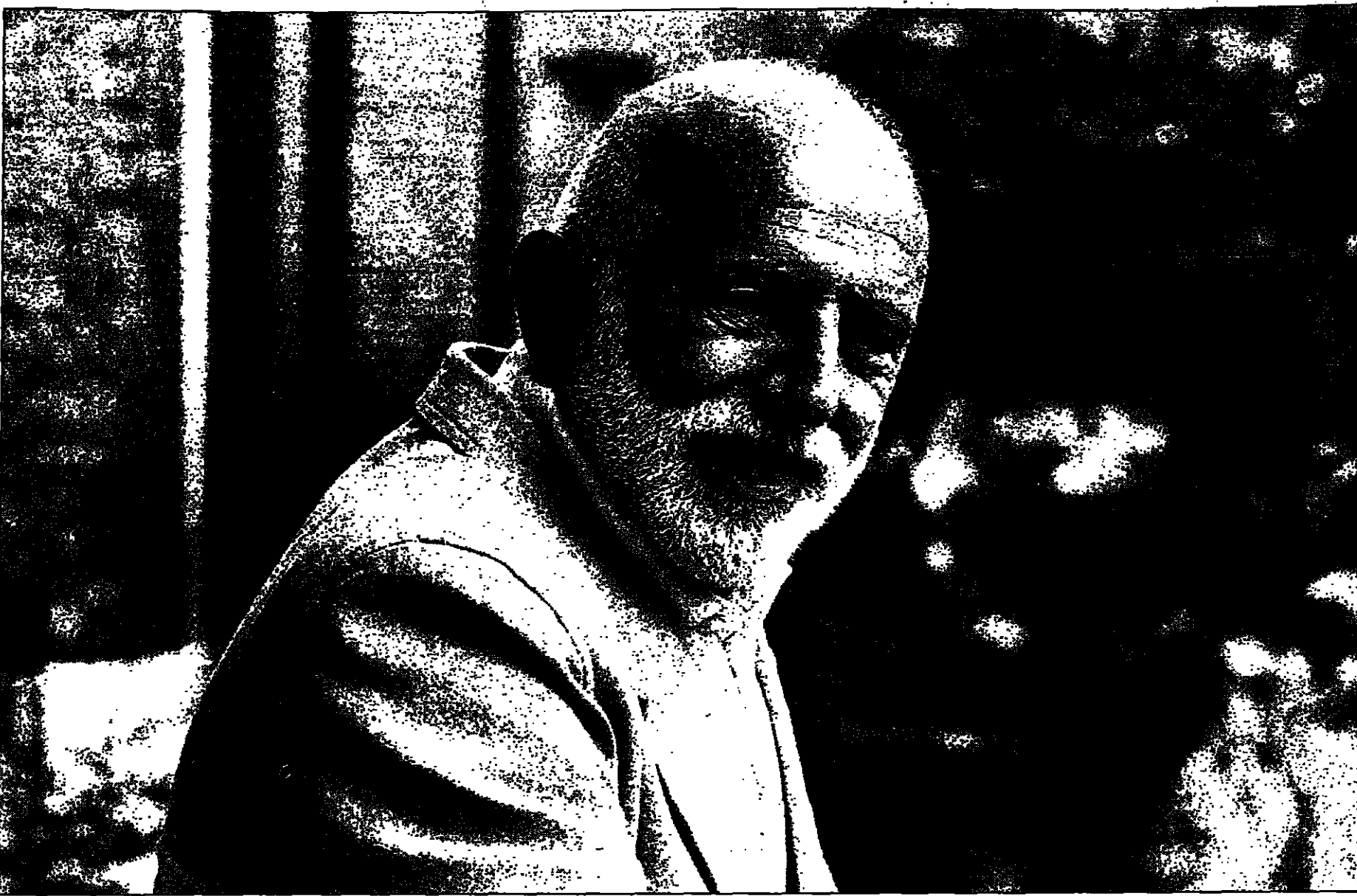
JEROME ROBBINS, who has died aged 79, was considered the best (some would say the only) American-born classical choreographer. He also choreographed, and sometimes directed, some of the most popular and respected American musical comedies, including *On the Town*, *The King and I*, *Peter Pan*, *Cyrano*, and his two most famous, *West Side Story* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. He was associated with the New York City Ballet from 1948, and as an artist was driven, always working, usually on multiple projects. He was an uncompromising perfectionist.

His works were innovative, even experimental, yet he understood the theatre and the popular audience and never forgot that his most important task was to put on a show. He was a magnificent storyteller, and his musicals were masterpieces of organization, he had an instinctive knowledge of the proper balance of singing, dancing, and drama, and the shows he directed were propelled by an internal engine that made them airtight and the action seem inevitable.

Robbins was born Jerome Rabinowitz in New York City. The family changed the name to the more American-sounding Robbins in the 1940s. His father, Harry, ran a delicatessen and later became a corset manufacturer. Robbins attended high school in Weehawken, New Jersey. He and his sister, Sonia, were given the cultural enrichments of the American middle-class of that period, which included piano lessons and, for his sister, modern dance.

Robbins attended New York University for a short period in 1935, intending to major in chemistry. A slump in the family's fortunes forced him to withdraw, and he became more and more interested in dance and theatre. He studied at the Dance Center in Manhattan, taking classes with modern dancers Gluck Sandor and Felicia Sorel. Through Gluck, who also was involved in theatre, Robbins started acting, taking small roles in plays and dancing in the chorus of Broadway musicals.

Although modern dance was the dominant form in America in the 1930s, there was no major ballet company in New York until a decade later — Robbins studied other types of dancing as well, taking ballet lessons with Ella Daganova, Spanish dance with Helena de la Cruz, oriental dance with Nimura, interpretive dance with his sister, and choreography with the legendary Bessie Schoenberg at the New York Dance League. He began to choreograph the summer shows at Lake Tami-tani, a Pocomo resort in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Robbins joined the fledgling Ballet Theater (later American Ballet Theater) for its



Robbins... 'If your image of the American teenage boy is a sassy tough guy in blue jeans with a switchblade and a wad of bubblegum, you're seeing a Robbins creation' TONY PRIME

second season (1940-41) and was an important part of that company's most fertile creative period. He began in the corps de ballet, but was soon given solo roles, dancing in Antony Tudor's *Romeo and Juliet*, Leonide Massine's *Aleko*, David Lichine's *Helen of Troy* and Michael Fokine's *Bluebird*. He was most known for his comic roles.

American ballet was heavily influenced by the Ballets Russes during the 1940s; the repertoires were mostly composed of hits of the great Diaghilev company. A steady diet of dancing happy peasants in ersatz Russian folk costumes was the major impetus which led Robbins to create his first ballet, *Fancy Free*, set to music by the then-unknown composer, Leonard Bernstein. Arguably the greatest first ballet ever made, *Fancy Free* (the story of three young sailors on shore-leave during wartime; it was made in 1944, at the height of American involvement in the second world war)

was an instant hit. It remains one of the few really good comic ballets and has become a 20th century classic.

Fancy Free launched Robbins' Broadway career, becoming a musical comedy, *On the Town*, which in turn became a Hollywood movie. Robbins dominated American musical theatre for the next two decades, although his Broadway career was parallel to his work as a ballet dancer, choreographer, and company director. For Broadway, he choreographed *Billion Dollar Baby* (1945), *High Button Shoes* (1947), *Look Ma! I'm Dancing* (on which he also collaborated as writer and director with George Abbott; 1948), *Miss Liberty* (1949), *Call Me Madam* (1950), *The King and I* (1951), *Two's Company* (1952) and *Wonderful Town* (1953).

In 1954, he was co-director of *The Pajama Game*. That year, he both choreographed and directed *Peter Pan*, which starred Mary Martin and Cyril Richard. In 1959, he

directed and choreographed *Gypsy*. His two most popular and enduring musicals, *West Side Story* (1957) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), were ones in which he had almost complete control. *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, in 1989, was his last Broadway show.

Robbins kept a foot firmly in the ballet world throughout his career. When presenting the Kennedy Center Honors Award to Alexandra Danilova, he said, in a charming speech, that it was watching Danilova dance that had made him realize the expressive possibilities of classical dancing.

In 1948, Robbins joined the New York City Ballet at George Balanchine's invitation as both dancer and associate artistic director. There, he created a few roles, most notably the title part in Balanchine's *Tyl Ulenspiegel*, but quickly began to make his mark as a choreographer. His first ballets were experimental, even avant-

garde. This was a period when ballet seemed to be in competition with both the ghost of the Ballets Russes and the very real presence of a vibrant modern dance scene, and most ballet choreographers were trying to make works which would be judged "relevant" in the nuclear age.

Robbins experimented with how to portray contemporary American life in ballet. His first works dealt with weighty societal and intellectual issues. *The Guests* (1949) concerned tensions between groups of people: those accepted by society and those who are not (some feel this was a rough sketch of an idea later fulfilled in *West Side Story*). *The Age of Anxiety* (1950), suggested by Auden's poem and set to a Bernstein score, was a complex work about how people attempt to cope with the difficulties of modern life. Both ballets were much discussed and respected without being very popular, but *The Cage* (1951), an ener-

getic thriller about predatory female insects that seduce, mate and kill, was a blockbuster in its time.

In his early days at New York City Ballet, Robbins also made lighter works, including *The Pied Piper* (1951), a jazzy work to a score by Aaron Copland in Robbins's American teenager mode, and *Afternoon of a Faun* (1953), a study of dancers in a studio and the interplay between the stage and real emotions. Robbins also choreographed two very successful comic ballets: *Funfairs* (1953), in which the dancers are dressed as musical instruments, and one of the funniest ballets ever made, *The Concert* (1956), where an audience composed of very recognisable types (the henpecked husband, the dreaming youth, the ditty lady in a big hat) act out their fantasies while listening to Chopin.

In 1958, Robbins started his own short-lived chamber-sized company Ballets USA. The first repertoire was completely his,

and the ballets were experimental, using jazz scores (*NY Export: Opus Jazz*) or no score (*Monks*). In his works of this period, Robbins saw the American dancer as a teenager, and seemed to be working towards a marriage of popular culture and classical ballet. This interplay is the central theme of his career. Like the writer Gore Vidal, Robbins sometimes made a popular and a serious version of the same idea (*West Side Story* and *The Guests*; *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Dybbuk Variations*). After his jazz/teenager experiments, Robbins seemed to have worked out a way to live and create in both worlds. The popular theatre was the world of the concrete, the storyteller. The ballet world was for the abstract, for "things which can't be named," as he once was quoted as saying.

He returned to City Ballet with a one-hour ballet set to Chopin called *Dances at a Gathering*, in which the dan-

cers were decidedly individuals, yet there was no discernible story. Future works became more and more abstract, yet were never distant. Like the ballets of Balanchine, Robbins's ballets were "about" the music and the people. If there was a difference, it was mostly by dint of background (Balanchine, a generation older, had trained at one of the great ballet academies in St Petersburg) and the fact that, for Balanchine, the music was always first, while, for Robbins, dancing, as he often said, "is about relationships".

Robbins glorified the American teenager in his work, but working with real American teenagers in the dance studio was another story. He was known as a hard taskmaster, and had no patience for anything falling below the highest standard. Unlike most contemporary choreographers who improvise in the studio, Robbins arrived knowing exactly what he wanted down to the last step.

If a dancer could not do the step, he either learned it or lost the role. Where Robbins was sometimes indecisive in matters of casting, and he was famous for choosing a group of dancers and making each learn all the roles, though not making the final casting decision until shortly before the premiere.

ROBBIENS maintained this demand for perfection until the end of his life. He seldom let his ballets be danced by any company besides the New York City Ballet (except for the Paris Opera Ballet). In the 10 years since Balanchine's death, when there has been much grumbling about the state of disrepair of the Balanchine repertory in American dance circles, Robbins's ballets were maintained in pristine condition. Although he had been quite ill for some time before his death, he continued to conduct rehearsals and to make changes. His last ballet was *Brandenburgs* two seasons ago; last year, he staged his version of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*.

Robbins's attention to classical ballet did much to give the art credibility at a time when many Americans did not see it as part of their world. He brought America to the rest of the world, as well. If your image of the American teenage boy is a sassy, likeable tough guy clad in blue jeans with a switchblade in his pocket and a wad of bubblegum in his mouth, you're seeing a Robbins creation.

Jerome Robbins is survived by his sister Sonia Cullinan, 15 musicals and 66 ballets.

Alexandra Tomalin

Jerome Robbins (Rabinowitz), choreographer and director, born October 11, 1918; died July 29, 1998

Letter

John Walker writes: Ronald Bergan was right in yesterday's obituary of Binnie Barnes that *Hallucelli's Film-Goer's Companion* killed her off "many years ago" but neglected to point out that the error was corrected in the 10th edition (published 1993) and subsequent editions. Like yourself, we correct errors as soon as possible.

● The omission of a line in the obituary suggested that the Ritz Brothers appeared with Barnes in *The Last of the Mohicans*. This should have read *The Three Musketeers*.

Birthdays

Lynne Reid Banks, playwright, 69; Stuart Bedford, conductor, 59; Kenny Burrell, jazz guitarist, 62; Dean Cain, actor, 32; Bronie Cawley, tennis player, 47; Geraldine Chaplin, actress, 54; Henri Decae, film director, 53; Jonathan Dimbleby, broadcaster, 54; Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, former Conservative minister, 56; Prof Milton Friedman, economist, 88; Frank Giles, former editor, the Sunday Times, 79; Sir Richard Greenbury, group chairman, Marks and Spencer, 62; Penny Hughes, former president, Coca Cola, Great Britain, 38; Stanley Jordan, jazz guitarist, 39; Ralph Koltai, stage designer, 74; Sherry Lansing, film producer, 54; Mary Lattimore, writer, 50; Humphrey Malins, Conservative MP, 53; Andrew Marr, political columnist, 38; Alan Meale, MP, junior environment minister, 49; Judge Norma Negus, 66; Peter Nichols, playwright, 71; Anthony Scrivener, QC, barrister, 63; Derek Thompson, broadcaster, 48; Prof Howard C Thomas, professor of medicine, 53; Betty Williams, Labour MP, 56; Andrea Worrall, managing director, Granada Productions, 54.

Sir David Hunt

A mastermind of war and peace

IN pre-war Oxford, Sir David Hunt, who has died aged 84, was widely regarded as one of the brightest men of his generation and seemed set for a distinguished academic career. Yet, as for many of his contemporaries, the war took a hand and he joined the Diplomatic Service, serving as assistant private secretary to Clement Attlee and Winston Churchill. As head of the Central Africa Department, he accompanied Harold Macmillan on his tour of southern and western Africa in 1960 and was credited with writing Macmillan's "winds of change" speech.

At Wadham College, Oxford, he achieved first class honours in Mods and Greats, and after taking a diploma in classical archaeology, was elected a fellow of Magdalen in 1937. In early 1940 he was commissioned into the Army and posted to the Middle East. Almost immediately he was transferred to staff duties, remaining an intelligence officer for the remainder of the war. He ended it as Colonel, General Staff, Allied Force Headquarters, and a close subordinate of the Supreme Allied Commander, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander.

In 1946 Lord Alexander, as he had by then become, was invited to become governor-general of Canada, and David accompanied him to Ottawa for a year to help prepare the official dispatches on his campaign. The final version, based on relatively minor amendments, on Hunt's draft, was later described by Nigel Nicholson, Alex's biographer, as "among the great state-papers of our military history".

In 1966 Hunt published his first volume of autobiography, *A Don at War*, giving a

fascinating account of his service and his contacts with those responsible for executing the war in the Mediterranean, from Churchill down. For security reasons he was unable to acknowledge the part played by the breaking of the German naval and military cyphers in the success of the North Africa campaigns, and to remedy this a revised edition of the book was published in 1990. Although a devotee of Alexander, of whom he had nothing but good to say, Hunt levelled some criticism at Montgomery for using both his official dispatches and his subsequent published memoirs to rewrite history to his own advantage. He was also, less predictably, critical of Rommel's

generals, maintaining that his reputation, even in Germany, was at least in part the product of extravagant adulation by the British media. On his return from Ottawa in 1947, instead of returning to academic life, Hunt surprised his Oxford contemporaries by joining the Dominion Office (shortly to become the Commonwealth Relations Office), and the following year was posted to Pretoria, the first of a number of African jobs he was to have during his diplomatic career. He was not there long, however, before being brought back to London in 1950 as assistant private secretary to the prime minister, serving first Attlee and then Churchill on the latter's return to power.



Hunt... in 1977 when he won the BBC Mastermind quiz

After leaving No 10, Hunt rejoined the Commonwealth Relations Office and spent a period as deputy high commissioner in Lahore before returning to London in 1956 to take charge of the Central Africa Department. There he had particular responsibility for the affairs of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyassaland, which, combining as it did a semi-independent country, Southern Rhodesia, and two dependent territories, Northern Rhodesia and Nyassaland, gave him direct personal experience of the process of transition from Empire to Commonwealth.

It was entirely appropriate, therefore, that he should have been one of the officials chosen to accompany Macmillan on his tour of western and southern Africa in early 1960, and should have played a significant part in the drafting of the then prime minister's famous "winds of change" speech to the South African parliament during that tour. Later that year Hunt was appointed deputy high commissioner in Nigeria, where he served until 1962, whereupon he became the first British high commissioner to the newly-independent Uganda and was closely involved in the decision to accede to that government's request for British troops to help suppress an army mutiny in 1964. Thereafter he became, successively, high commissioner to Cyprus in 1965, to Nigeria in 1967 and ambassador to Brazil in 1969, retiring from the Diplomatic Service in 1973.

After the distinction of his wartime achievements as a young man, his career as a diplomat never quite matched up either to his early promise or probably to his own aspirations. At heart he remained a thinker and critic rather than a man of action — a brilliant

staff officer both in the Army and in Downing Street, but at heart a scholar and an academic. It was perhaps typical of him that during his time as British high commissioner in Cyprus, when attending a speech day at the English School in Nicosia, he should choose, contrary to local advice, to address the students in Greek rather than English, notwithstanding the fact that many of them were of Turkish origin.

ALTHOUGH his post-retirement interests were diverse, including a directorship of the Observer newspaper, they were also mainly academic in nature. But Hunt will be best remembered by a wider public for his television appearances, and for not only winning the BBC Television *Mastermind* competition in 1977, but for gaining the ultimate accolade of the prize-winners' competition, *Mastermind of Masterminds*, in 1982.

Although cheerful and extrovert, he was very conscious of his own abilities and was not averse to lecturing others on subjects on which they were entitled to believe they were as well, or better, informed than he.

He was married in 1948 to Pamela Medawar, with whom he had two sons. To his genuine dismay, and I believe, amazement, this marriage broke up in the mid-1960s. Miriamthousa, whom he had earlier met in Nigeria, and who, together with the sons of his first marriage, survives him.

David Scott

Sir David Wathen Stather Hunt, diplomat and academic, born September 25, 1913; died July 30, 1998

A Country Diary

SOMERSET: The difficulty of making even an occasional delivery of leaflets to every household in the village makes one sympathetic to the people whose daily job is delivering the mail. Several lanes have no name, some cottages have neither name nor number. At one house the dog is permanently poised to leap and snap.

A friend who works for the Post Office gets up at 4am every Monday to Friday in time to be at the sorting office by 6.10. She and colleagues then sort the mail into pigeon holes representing the different rounds. Detailed local knowledge is needed for the sorting of each batch into the correct walk-order. In the town deliveries are done on foot, while vans head off down the lanes to villages and farms.

JOHN VALLINS

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

THE village of Althorpe is in north Lincolnshire, not Humberside, where Pass notes it yesterday (G2, page 4). Humberside has been abolished as a county council.

DOWTY Woodville Polymer's payment to settle a lawsuit with the US Justice Department was \$12.35 million, not sterling, as reported on page 20 in some editions of yesterday's paper.

LORD Callaghan's father was a coastguard at Brixham, not Brixton as we said in an article on political dynasties (G2, page 6, Wednesday).

CHANNINGS Wood prison is near Newton Abbot in Devon, not in Kent as we said in a news report (page 4, Wednesday).

IN our interview with Jane McDonald (Friday Review, page 14, July 24) we referred to her as a native of the north-east. She is, in fact, from Wakefield.

WE wrongly identified the Orkadian novelist and poet who influenced Peter Maxwell Davies (Friday Review, page 16, July 17). His name is George Mackay Brown.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the Readers' Editor on 0171 239 5528 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Letters to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 5937. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Death Notices

HENDERSON, R. F. (Glad). On 28th July, 1998, peacefully in hospital, aged 70 years. Brother of Pat and loving uncle of Joyce and Penny. Funeral service at St. Mary's Church, Rock, Bury at 12.00pm on Wednesday, August 5th. An enquiry to: Albert R. Black (Funeral Director) Ltd, 34 South Oak Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4AT. Tel: Wilmslow 01629 62009.

WTO to place your own death notice in the Sun and Sun Mon-Fri.

كتاب الاصل

Producers feel pinch

Supermarkets to face price check

Tony May

THE Government's consumer watchdog is to investigate supermarkets to see if they are passing on the benefits of their buying power to customers and if they have undue power over their suppliers.

Shares in Sainsbury, Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury, the "big four" supermarkets — tumbled on the stock market as the inquiry could trigger a new price war.

William Collum, retail analyst at Paribas Capital Markets, said: "It may be that the cosy times are over. For the past 18 months or two years there has not been significant price action to disturb the market equilibrium. Now that might change."

John Bridgeman, the director general of fair trading,

who hopes to have his preliminary investigations out of the way by the end of the year, said that over the past few months a number of concerns had been raised about the buying power that the leading supermarket groups can exercise.

He cited the report of the Welsh Affairs committee into beef and lamb prices and a study commissioned by the Liberal Democrats, who accused the "big four" supermarkets of helping to destroy local economies.

Bill Myers, an analyst at Williams de Broe, said: "The farming industry is in real trouble. The market price of beef and lamb has reduced very significantly but the price of a lamb chop has barely shifted at all."

He said the retailers were likely to cite falling shelf prices and static operating margins in their defence.

The big four control 45 per

cent of the market and their profit margins are the envy of European chains. But Conrad Rowland, an analyst at Retail Directions, said this owed more to the efficiency of UK firms than to profiteering.

He said the big four were tougher on operating efficiency, staffing costs and property costs than their European rivals. Some margins reflected marked differences in demand, like that for fresh fruit and vegetables in France versus oven-ready meals in the UK.

If the big four's success has been partly due to their ability to squeeze good terms out of suppliers, they have also escaped the pressure of stores in countries such as Germany, where consumers expect rock-bottom prices.

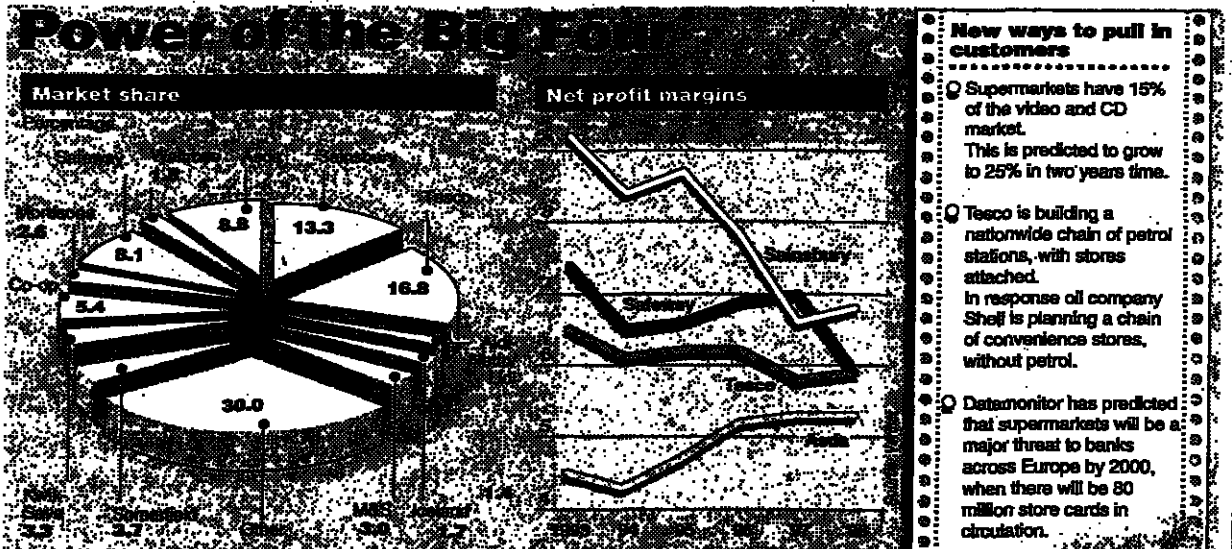
Retailers said that the supermarkets were being criticised for problems which had very little to do with them.

The British Retail Consor-

tium said: "We welcome the inquiry as it should clear the air. We are not surprised the OFT has called an inquiry as there has been a head of steam building up as farmers and manufacturers feel the pinch."

Sainsbury said that it monitored its prices against those charged by competitors. Sainsbury said it would co-operate fully with the inquiry. Tesco said the inquiry would confirm that supermarkets operated in the best interests of the customer, while Asda said it was confident because its prices were 5-10 per cent below its competitors.

Consumer watchdogs urged the OFT to concentrate on customers rather than producers. Mark Purdy from the Consumers' Association said: "We are concerned that this inquiry appears to have been prompted primarily by complaints from producers rather than consumers."



Lord Sainsbury sidesteps row

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

LORD Sainsbury of Turville, appointed a minister in this week's Government reshuffle, has stepped down as chairman of the supermarket group that bears his name to sidestep a political row over conflict of interest.

He announced his retirement from the board of J Sainsbury in May, but yesterday brought forward his departure which was to take effect in September.

Lord Sainsbury, formerly David Sainsbury, created a life baron by Tony Blair in

1997, has taken an unpaid job as trade and industry minister with responsibility for science and technology.

This week the Conservatives sought guarantees over his role in the investigation into the profitability and operation of the big four supermarkets — Sainsbury's, Asda, Tesco and Safeway.

Amid Tory jibes over the potential for conflicts of interest, officials insisted that he would abide by the ministerial code drawn up to avoid such clashes. The Tories also urged him to sell his shares in the company.

Lord Sainsbury said in a statement: "I have had 82 enjoyable fulfilling and chal-

lenging years as director of the company, 17 of those as finance director and the last six as chairman. My decision to retire from the board was not one I took lightly."

He is expected to be replaced by a former Sainsbury's deputy chairman, Sir George Bull, aged 62, who has been on the board since April, has taken over the chairman's role.

In the OFT investigation, it is decided that the large groups go in for unfair trading practices, the case can be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which in turn can ask the Trade and Industry Secretary

to take action.

The OFT investigation follows concerns that the major supermarkets are using their collective buying power to force down suppliers' prices, without passing the savings on to customers.

Director General of Fair Trading John Bridgeman said yesterday: "It has happened, it is likely that the result will be increased profitability of the supermarkets in the area where their market power is concentrated, namely grocery retailing."

Further investigations are expected to take until the end of the year, when the findings will be reviewed by Mr Bridgeman.

Rolls-Royce chief quits over brand bickering

Ian King

GRAHAM Morris, chief executive of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, resigned yesterday, two days after it was revealed that ownership of the Rolls-Royce brand will pass from Volkswagen, which thought it owned the marque, to its fellow German rival BMW.

In the latest twist to one of the most compelling takeover sagas the motor industry has seen in years, it is thought that Mr Morris has agreed to join BMW, which will own the Rolls-Royce name after 30th September.

Workers at the Rolls factory in Crewe are understood to have been given the news yesterday afternoon, after rumours started circulating at Volkswagen's headquarters in Germany.

Insiders said Mr Morris — who famously opposed attempts by a consortium of British motor enthusiasts to buy the company — was fed up at the continued bickering

over the brand's future. They said there was "an atmosphere of despair" at the Crewe factory, which will continue to produce Bentleys for Volkswagen, but which will lose production of Rolls-Royce cars in four years' time.

No-one from either Volkswagen or Rolls-Royce Motor Cars would confirm last night that Mr Morris had resigned. However, it is expected that a full statement will be issued by the company today.

Mr Morris's departure comes two months after Vickers, the UK defence group, agreed to sell the 66-year-old marque to Volkswagen for £430 million.

The sale came after a bitter bidding battle with BMW, Volkswagen's deadly rival, which had earlier agreed a deal with Vickers.

Although the Rolls-Royce workforce avoided publicly backing either side, it is thought that privately, Mr Morris — described by industry sources as a "straight-talking Lancastrian steeped

in cars" — had favoured the BMW bid. In particular, he was said to be worried by the uncertainty caused by the bidding war, during which time Volkswagen, the company are thought to have fallen by 30 per cent.

Although that uncertainty appeared to have ended in May, with the sale of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, there was a further twist, this week when BMW triumphantly announced that, for just £40 million, it had acquired the rights to the Rolls-Royce name — including the famous "Silver Lady" insignia — from Rolls-Royce, the aerospace and engineering group, which had previously owned the rights to the brand.

The news came as a shock to VW and in particular, to the workforce at Crewe, which had been led to believe that their jobs had been secured by the VW deal.

Significantly, it was also said to have come as "the last straw" for Mr Morris, who BMW had courted while it was putting its bid together.

New drugs lift Glaxo as profits drop

Julia Finch

DRUGS group Glaxo Wellcome yesterday revealed a huge slide in profits — but shares in the company soared 150p to 1900p, adding 25 billion to the value of the company.

More than £300 million was wiped off profits in the first six months of this year, largely as a result of a downturn in sales of Zantac — its once blockbusting anti-ulcer drug, which has now come off patent. City dealers were cheered, however, by the progress of Glaxo's new generation of asthma, HIV, migraine and depression drugs and the company's value rose to nearly £70 billion.

In 1994 Zantac was the most prescribed drug in the world. It accounted for 43 per cent of Glaxo's sales and the firm was almost a one-product company. But the patents that protected it from competition have expired. Its sales in the past six months collapsed by 49 per cent compared with 1997 levels and yesterday Glaxo said that it now accounts for just 10 per cent of total group sales.

The Zantac effect, combined with a second patent expiry on Glaxo's herpes treatment, Zovirax, and the impact of the strong pound, left first-half profits down from £1.5 billion to £1.3 billion.

Glaxo's new drugs, however, are showing impressive growth. The company has 30 per cent of the £5 billion a year market for respiratory drugs. Serevent is now the world's largest-selling asthma drug and demand was up 24 per cent. Some 17 per cent of Glaxo's sales now come from treatments for HIV and herpes — which chairman Sir Richard Sykes described as a vast untapped market.

Daimler drives to record

David Goss in Frankfurt

DAIMLER-BENZ, Germany's biggest corporation, yesterday declared record profits and sales in the run-up to its planned merger with US carmaker Chrysler.

In Daimler's last results before the creation of what chairman Jürgen Schrenupp called "the first world plc",

earnings more than doubled in the first half of this year to DM3.9 billion (£1.94 billion). Driven by increased sales in all divisions, apart from the loss-making train-builder, Adtranz, steep rises in productivity and a favourable exchange rate, Daimler is on course to boost sales this year to DM140 billion. It plans to increase its workforce by up to 6,000 this year.

Commercial vehicles, a

DM49 million loser in the first half of 1997, posted a DM870 million earnings while the Dasa aerospace division, once a drain, boosted profits from DM74 million to DM336 million.

Mr Schrenupp repeatedly pointed to Daimler Chrysler as a giant automotive group: No 3 in the world and one of the world's top 10 companies. Amid reports that BMW is planning to invest some DM500 million in a new Rolls-Royce plant in Britain, Daimler said it expects to produce annually up to 2,000 of its rival luxury car, the Maybach, which should go on sale as early as 2001 — two years before the first new Rolls.

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Cyprus 0.83	Ireland 7.115	Norway 12.05	Switzerland 2.385
Denmark 10.83	Israel 5.00	Portugal 286.50	Turkey 427.740
Finland 8.672	Italy 2.802	Saudi Arabia 6.06	USA 1.589
France 9.449			

Supplied by Reuters (journaling rates, actual and rounded)



Are shoppers benefiting from supermarket buying power? PHOTOGRAPH: TRICIA de COURCY LING

News in brief

£11m redress for victims

NEARLY £11 million was paid out last year by the Investors' Compensation Scheme to victims of investment fraud and sharp practice, according to the scheme's annual report, published yesterday. Thirty per cent of claims received in the year to the end of March were pension transfer and opt-out cases. In its 10 years, the scheme has paid more than £128 million to 11,000 investors. — *Pauline Springett*

EC looks at UniChem bid

A BID by Alliance UniChem to acquire a 36 per cent stake in the Italian pharmaceutical wholesaler Unifarma Distribuzioni through the British company's subsidiary, Alleanza Salute, has been referred to the European Commission under anti-trust regulations.

The commission said Italian authorities had asked it to assess the deal "given the competitive threat to local markets". — *Reuters*

Oil price dip hits Lasso

LASSO, the British oil and gas exploration and production firm, moved into loss in the first half of the year because of a rapid fall in oil prices. Chief executive Joe Darby said: "We can't rely on prices recovering to any material extent." The company reported a net loss of \$5 million against profits of \$26 million a year earlier. — *Reuters*

Major firm in pipes buy

CARLYLE Group of America, the private investment firm, has completed a management buy-out of French piping manufacturer Geyoer SA through a newly formed European division. Carlyle's advisers include John Major, the former prime minister, and former US Secretary of State James Baker. — *Reuters*

British Gas to cut prices

CENTRICA, part of British Gas, plans to cut prices for prepayment customers, including meter users, by around 8 per cent from October. Companies have been under pressure from watchdog Ofgas to give meter users the same discounts as account customers. — *Reuters*

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Finance Guardian

Mortgage fears hit shares



Staff leaving the Birmingham Midshires office in Wolverhampton after its takeover by the Halifax was announced yesterday

Notebook

Money to burn but naught to buy



Mark Milner

IT IS unfortunate for the Halifax that its disappointing half-year figures were unveiled within 24 hours of another former building society, Abbey National, reporting a better-than-expected performance.

The Halifax has done well enough in newer areas of operation — Clerical Medical and Halifax Life, for example — but, crucially, the mortgage market is looking sticky.

Such growth as there is to be had is coming in the remortgage sector, an area towards which the Halifax has, in the past, shown a degree of coolness and where competition ensures margins are tight.

The problem for the Halifax in comparison with the Abbey National, for example, is that its traditional business is reckoned to account for around 80 per cent of income, compared to the latter's 50:50 split.

But though it has plenty of money to spend on acquisitions which would broaden the balance of its income stream prices in areas where purchases would win City plaudits — life assurance and fund management, say — still look high to the Halifax management.

The one deal it has been able to put together, the acquisition of the Birmingham Midshires building society (for a tidy £750 million), increases its exposure to the area which are proving most problematic.

The irony was not lost on the City, which promptly knocked Halifax shares back some 5 per cent, leaving them close to the level at which they stood when the bank came to the market last year. That looks a little harsh. The Halifax seem short on strategy today but if life gets tougher in the financial services sector and prices come down, its financial clout will put it in a strong position.

Worldly goods

DAIMLER-BENZ chairman Jürgen Schrempp's claim that his company's merger with Chrysler in the US will form the "first world plc" looks overdone.

Ford and General Motors, for example, might have a word to say. And for those tempted to argue that they are US groups with global reach, what then about the banking world's HSBC?

Hyperbole aside, however, under Mr Schrempp's guidance Daimler is beginning to look like a very interesting company indeed.

The broad spread of operations built up by former Daimler boss Edzard Reuter has been slimmed down. The business is now clearly focused on the automotive sector.

That might look unfair to such chunky interests as Daimler-Benz Aerospace (Dasa) and the railway business.

The latter, however, has already been folded into a joint venture with ABB. As for Dasa, its defence interests are expected to be part of Europe Aerospace, the much-talked-about European alliance to be built around British Aerospace, Dasa and France's Aerospatiale. That would leave Dasa as a minority shareholder, albeit an important one, in a group with its own independent corporate identity.

The German group will find itself in a similar situation with the jewel in the crown of its civil aircraft business — Airbus Industrie — once the latter converts from its present, rather hybrid, partnership structure into a conventional company.

Admirable though such clarity of focus will be in operational terms, it is not suddenly tilting the Daimler culture from Germanic to global. Indeed those who hope that Daimler's alliance with Chrysler might provide the Trojan horse by which Anglo-Saxon concepts of corporate governance can be more rapidly infiltrated into Germany might care to note that Deutsche Bank, with a 21 per cent stake Daimler's biggest shareholder, has no intention of reducing its holding in the merged DaimlerChrysler business. Enough said.

Fast and fair

NOT TOO many eyebrows will be raised by the details of the draft Financial Services and Markets Bill, published yesterday, which will make the Financial Services Authority the industry's sole watchdog.

Much of what is in the Bill has been widely trailed.

One point is worth noting. The regulatory regime envisaged will have an new appeals procedure.

Instead of an independent commissioner there will be an tribunal to which those affected by FSA decisions can appeal and which will come under the Lord Chancellor's office.

There are clear attractions in the idea.

The Lord Chancellor's Department has the potential to serve, if necessary, as a counterweight to the FSA which, within the industry, wields considerable power.

Yet there are bound to be questions about its role.

Regulation needs to be fair and to be seen to be fair. It also needs to be administered with the maximum speed and the minimum cost commensurate with achieving that end, qualities not always associated with Government departments.

£750m takeover by Halifax attacked as unimaginative

Lee Stuart

HALIFAX, the building society turned bank, yesterday finalised the £750 million takeover of Birmingham Midshires Building Society. But critics accused it of failing to find an imaginative target for its £1 billion cash pile.

Although Halifax managed to reduce the price of Birmingham Midshires by £30 million in four months of haggling, it remained on the defensive and forced to argue that a "big takeover deal" was still to come.

The need for the company to orchestrate a huge shift in direction was underlined by results which, despite showing a 10 per cent growth in profits to £443 million, left City analysts convinced the group is still far too dependent on an uninspiring mortgage market.

The bank says this deal will increase its core business: mortgage lending and deposit taking. Halifax and Midshires combined would have 20 per cent of the mortgage market. But its arch-rival Abbey National has just said that at this stage in the economic

cycle, the mortgage business is no longer profitable for banks because the margins are not high enough. Although Halifax pledged to reduce its dependency on traditional areas such as mortgage lending and deposit taking from 77 per cent to 50 per cent "within the next five to 10 years", this is almost double the period it took Abbey to achieve a similar result.

The bank also plunged back into the less lucrative remort-

gage market in order to gain market share. Analysts doubt its share of gross lending will remain as high as its current 14 per cent share. Concerns about future profitability helped knock 36½p off the shares leaving them at 730½p.

Hugh Pye, banking analyst at Robert Fleming, said: "I think they would be doing reasonably well to achieve even 10 per cent without compromising margins."

Halifax admitted that the Midshires deal was not the

end of its ambitions, but chief executive, Mike Blackburn, said: "The two key issues we have been looking at are: does it fit strategically and does it add value? Until we can put a tick in both boxes, then we are not going to fritter shareholders' money — the City may find this frustrating but that's just tough."

Providing the qualifying members and the regulators approve the deal, Midshires' one million qualifying members will receive windfall payouts of an average of £750. Longer-term customers will be rewarded with a bigger bonus.

Pay day is scheduled for spring 1999.

Mike Jackson, Midshires' chief executive for eight years, who along with other board members issued his home phone number in the society's annual report and accounts, will stand down on August 20, and be succeeded by the present retail director Ian Kerr.

Jackson will remain "on hand for as long as needed to offer counsel". Midshires' chairman John Leighfield will become a non-executive director of the Halifax Group.

Halifax has pledged there will be no Midshires' branch

closures for three years and says it does not "intend or expect" the deal to result in any compulsory redundancies.

The brand will remain intact, again, for at least three years. In some cases there will be both a Halifax and a Midshires branch on the same high-street.

The Wolverhampton-based society will start selling some of the Halifax product range such as its current account — although with the Midshires badge.

The finance union BIFU expressed "cautious optimism" over the proposed deal, saying it would hold immediate talks with Halifax's senior management to clarify the finer details of the jobs promise.

But pro-mutuality campaigners were emphasising that the acquisition is not a done deal; prospectuses will be sent out to members over the next few weeks and the results of the ballot will be announced at a special

general meeting on December 11.

The price undercuts Halifax's original March offer by £30 million, because at that stage, its advisers Deutsche Bank, had not had the opportunity to survey the business fully.

As part of the deal, delayed because of wrangles between Midshires and the Royal Bank of Scotland which last August made an exclusive takeover offer to the society for up to £630 million, Midshires will take over management of Halifax's centralised lending book — mortgages which were sold through intermediaries rather than direct from the branches.

Midshires will also be used as an acquisition vehicle for other loan books.

Mr Kerr, Midshires' new chief executive currently heads up all the sales, marketing and customer relations for the society. He joined Midshires nine years ago from Lloyds Bowmaker.

Timetable of a takeover

1997
August 13: Announcement that Royal Bank of Scotland is to pay up to £630 million for Birmingham Midshires

1998
February: Birmingham Midshires says it wants RBS to raise its offer

March 9: Halifax offers £780 million for Birmingham Midshires

March 10: RBS says £630 million offer is binding

June: RBS releases Birmingham Midshires from exclusivity agreement, freeing it to talk to Halifax and other potential buyers

July 30: Halifax announces £750 million takeover of the society

December 11: Planned date of special meeting for Birmingham Midshires members to vote on takeover proposals

1999
Spring: Deal expected to be completed

RoadChef pays £80m for more outlets

Nicholas Bannister, Chief Business Correspondent

HALF OF Britain's independent motorway service stations have been sold to RoadChef for £80.1 million, consolidating the company's position as the country's third largest operator.

RoadChef sold yesterday its half of Blue Bear Group and Take A Break from their management teams and their principal shareholder, the 31 investment trust, for cash.

Blue Bear, a former family-owned business which was sold to managers in 1995, owns Britain's first motorway service station, Watford Gap on the M1. It owns a further two, with a third under development.

Take A Break, started by Kenning Motor Group but sold to its management in 1994, runs the motorway service area at Stevenage on the M5. The site is believed to be the largest petrol station in Europe.

Granada is the largest motorway service station operator, followed by Welcome Break.

As a result of the deal, RoadChef will end up operating 17 sites with a further three under development, leaving just five motorway service stations still in independent hands.

RoadChef itself was bought earlier this year for £175 million by MSA Acquisitions, a company financed by Principal Finance Group, part of the Japanese-owned Wilko Europe investment house.

Nikko set up PFG in September last year to fund the acquisition of relatively recession-proof businesses with strong cash flows which could be sold at a profit three to five years later.

Keith Howard, PFG's managing director, said: "Our objective at the time of the RoadChef transaction was to add value to the company and these acquisitions will provide significant synergies."

These include increased purchasing power and head office cost savings.

rooms, car park, picnic area and children's play area, could be threatened since they were dependent upon the commercial viability of its other operations.

An expedited hearing of the case has been ordered and the full hearing is likely to take place in the High Court by early October.

Fast-track hearing for McDonald's case

THE CHOICE between a Big Mac and a service station fry-up is hardly the stuff of legends. But it is one which is going to occupy the finest legal minds in the country.

A High Court judge yesterday said Granada Hospitality could challenge McDonald's plans to build a

drive-through outlet next to its service station on the M4 at Penllergar, Wales.

Mr Justice Collins said Granada had an arguable case for challenging the grant of planning permission to the fast food operators. Although the plans approved by the local planning committee on July

1 contain a separate entrance for the McDonald's outlet, Granada fears that motorists will pass its service station, which houses a Little Chef, Burger King, 50-bed Travelodge, and a petrol station.

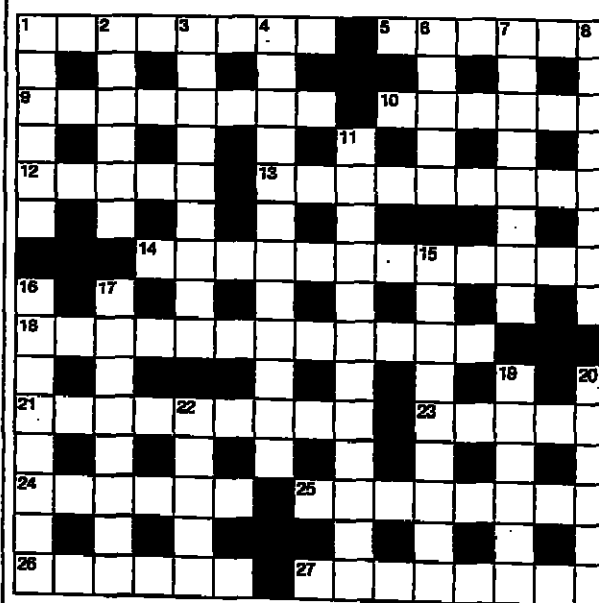
Granada also said that its non-profit-making facilities, such as toilets, wash-

rooms, car park, picnic area and children's play area, could be threatened since they were dependent upon the commercial viability of its other operations.

An expedited hearing of the case has been ordered and the full hearing is likely to take place in the High Court by early October.

Guardian Crossword No 21,341

Set by Pasquale



Across

- 1 Those in authority getting highest salary? (3,5)
- 5 Stage is having to accommodate hostess (5)
- 9 Player allowed in as a joker in the pack? (4,4)
- 10 There's some bone in front bits of fillet, butcher's liddle! (5)
- 12 Heaps — what the creep gives to teacher, might you say? (5)
- 13,2 On the loose, an alpaca relaxed in London building (9,6)

Down

- 14 Ideal pest set out in a religious epic (8,4)
- 15 A way of coping in the Latin lesson (5,7)
- 21 Tissues with which English writer absorbs bit of orange? (6)
- 23 Sort of blue mist beginning to lift round old city (5)
- 24 Flowering plants shoot up within island (6)
- 25 Poison gets one number on the outside — In one goes to bed (8)

26 Unreciprocated love always keeping fresh (3-3)

27 Unappreciative types like logs? (6)

Down

- 1 Hit nail to hold hard bit of wood (6)
- 2 See 13
- 3 Cars whisk around — tricky for non-motored vehicles (9)
- 4 A spa's air — all right possibly as a tonic (12)
- 5 Shrub in USA in which a maiden's hidden (5)
- 7 Court King may get protected by boy soldiers (6)
- 8 A material for edging paintings not fixed at table (12,5)
- 11 Little man upset over what modern women want? Thoughtfulness needed (12)
- 15 Try what succeeds for ever with the audience (6)
- 16 Skin disease is a devil, the thing upsettingly to puncture self-esteem (6)
- 17 Habit-forming but carbon-free substance with E number? (8)
- 19 Lover with project to hide deception (6)
- 20 Plant growing to 40 feet? That sounds worthy of regard (6)
- 22 Yen to tuck into bird overcoming a mammal (5)

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